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SERMONS

ON SEVERAL

SUBJECTS *and* OCCASIONS,

By the moſt Reverend

Dr. *JOHN TILLOTSON*,

LATE

Lord Archbiſhop of *Canterbury*.

VOLUME *the* ELEVENTH.

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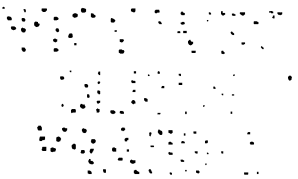
MDCCLVII.



SERMON CCVIII.

Of the neceſſity of good works.

TIT. iii. 8.

This is a faithful ſaying, and theſe things I will that thou affirm conſtantly, that they which have believed in GOD, *might be careful to maintain good works. Theſe things are good and profitable unto men.*

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The ſecond ſermon on this text.

FROM theſe words I have propoſed to handle theſe two points.

Firſt, the certain truth and credibility of this ſaying or propoſition, "that they which have believed "in GOD, ought to be careful to maintain good "works." This I have ſpoken to, and come now to the

Second, The great fitneſs and neceſſity of inculcating frequently upon all that profeſs themſelves Chriſtians, the indiſpenſable neceſſity of the practice of the virtues of a good life. In the handling of this point, I ſhall do theſe two things.

Firſt, I ſhall ſhew the great fitneſs and neceſſity of preſſing upon people the indiſpenſable neceſſity of the virtues of a good life. And,

Secondly, Anſwer an objection or two, to which the preaching of this kind of doctrine may ſeem liable. I begin with the

Firſt of theſe, viz. To ſhew the great fitneſs and neceſſity of inculcating and preſſing upon all

SERM. CCVIII. Chriſtians the indiſpenſable neceſſity of the virtues of a good life. And this will appear to be very fit and neceſſary upon theſe two accounts.

I. Becauſe men are ſo very apt to deceive themſelves in this matter, and ſo hardly brought to that wherein religion mainly conſiſts, viz. the practice of real goodneſs.

II. Becauſe of the indiſpenſable neceſſity of the thing to render us capable of the divine favour and acceptance, and of the reward of eternal life and happineſs.

I. Becauſe men are ſo very apt to deceive themſelves in this matter, and ſo hardly brought to that wherein religion mainly conſiſts, viz. the practice of real goodneſs. They are extremely deſirous to reconcile (if it be poſſible) the hopes of eternal happineſs in another world, with a liberty to live as they liſt in this preſent world; they are loth to be at the trouble and drudgery of mortifying their luſts, and ſubduing and governing their paſſions, and bridling their tongues, and ordering their whole converſation aright, and practiſing all thoſe duties which are comprehended in thoſe two great commandments, the love of GOD and our neighbour. They would fain get into the favour of GOD, "and make "their calling and election ſure," by ſome eaſier way, than by "giving all diligence, to add to their "faith virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, "and patience, and brotherly kindneſs, and charity."

The plain truth of the matter is, men had rather religion ſhould be any thing, than what indeed it is, the thwarting and croſſing of our vicious inclinations, the curing of our evil and corrupt affections, the due care and government of our unruly appetites and paſſions, the ſincere endeavour and conſtant practice

practice of all holineſs and virtue in our lives; and therefore they had much rather have ſomething that might handſomely palliate and excuſe their evil inclinations, than to extirpate them and cut them up; and rather than reform and amend their vicious lives, make GOD an honourable amends and compenſation for them in ſome other way. SERM. CCVIII.

This hath been the way and folly of mankind in all ages, to defeat the great end and deſign of religion, and to thruſt it by, by ſubſtituting ſomething eſe in the place of it, which they hope may ſerve the turn as well, and which hath the appearance of as much devotion and reſpect, and perhaps of more coſt and pains, than that which GOD requires of them. Men have ever been apt thus to impoſe upon themſelves, and to pleaſe themſelves with a conceit of pleaſing GOD full as well, or better, by ſome other way, than that which he hath pitched upon and appointed for them; not conſidering that GOD is a great King, and will be obſerved and obeyed by his creatures in his own way; and that obedience to what he commands is better and more acceptable to him, than any other ſacrifice that we can offer, which he hath not required at our hands; that he is infinitely wiſe and good, and therefore the laws and rules which he hath given us to live by, are more likely and certain means of our happineſs, than any inventions and devices of our own.

Thus I ſay, it hath been in all ages. The old world, after that general deluge which GOD ſent to puniſh the raging wickedneſs and impiety of men, by ſweeping all mankind from off the face of the earth, excepting only one family, which was ſaved to be the ſeminary of a new and better race of men; I ſay after this, the world in a ſhort ſpace fell off

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from the worſhip of the true GOD, to the worſhip of idols and falſe gods; being unwilling to bring themſelves to a conformity and likeneſs to the true GOD, they choſe falſe gods like themſelves, ſuch as might not only excuſe, but even countenance and abett their lewd and vicious practices.

And when GOD had made a new revelation of himſelf to the nation of the Jews, and given them the chief heads and ſubſtance of the natural law, written over again with his own finger in tables of ſtone, and many other laws concerning religious worſhip, and their civil converſation, ſuited and adapted to their preſent temper and condition; yet how ſoon did their religion degenerate into external obſervances, purifications and waſhings, and a multitude of ſacrifices, without any great regard to the inward and ſubſtantial parts of religion, and the practice of thoſe moral duties and virtues, which were in the firſt place required of them, and without which all the reſt found no acceptance with GOD. Hence are thoſe frequent complaints in the prophets, that their religion was degenerated into form and ceremony, into oblations and ſacrifices, the obſervance of faſts, and ſabbaths, and new moons; but had no power and efficacy upon their hearts and lives; was wholly deſtitute of inward purity and holineſs, of all ſubſtantial virtues, and the fruits of righteouſneſs in a good life. Thus GOD complains by the prophet Iſaiah, ch. i. 11, &c. "To what purpoſe is the multitude of your ſacrafices unto me, "ſaith the LORD? Bring no more vain oblations. "Incenſe is an abomination unto me, the new moons "and ſabbaths, the calling of aſſemblies I cannot "away with; it is iniquity, even the ſolemn meeting. Waſh you, make you clean, put away the evil "of

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" of your doings from before mine eyes. Ceaſe to
" do evil, learn to do well; ſeek judgment, relieve
" the oppreſſed, judge the fatherleſs, plead for the
" widow. Come now, and let us reaſon together,
" ſaith the LORD. Though your ſins be as ſcarlet,
" &c." Upon theſe terms GOD declares himſelf ready to be reconciled to them, and to have mercy on them. But all their external ſervices and ſacrifices, ſeparated from real goodneſs and righteouſneſs, were ſo far from appeaſing GOD's wrath, that they did but increaſe the provocation. And to the ſame purpoſe, chap. lxvi. 2, 3. " To this man will I
" look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite
" ſpirit, and trembleth at my word. He that kill-
" eth an ox, is as if he ſlew a man: he that ſacrifi-
" ceth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck: he
" that offereth an oblation, as if he offered ſwines
" blood: he that burneth incenſe, as if he bleſſed
" an idol. Yea, they have choſen their own ways,
" and their ſoul delighted in their abomination."
Jer. vi. 19, 20. " Hear, O earth: behold, I will
" bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of
" their thoughts, becauſe they have not hearkened
" unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it.
" To what purpoſe cometh there to me incenſe
" from Sheba? and the ſweet cane from a far coun-
" try? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor
" your ſacrifices ſweet unto me." They thought to pleaſe GOD with coſtly incenſe and ſacrifices, whilſt they rejected his law. And chap. vii. 4, 5, 6.
" Truſt ye not in lying words, ſaying, the temple
" of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the tem-
" ple of the LORD are theſe. For if ye thoroughly
" amend your ways, and your doings: if ye tho-
" roughly execute judgment between a man and

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" his neighbour; if ye oppreſs not the ſtranger, " the fatherleſs, and the widow, and ſhed not in- " nocent blood in this place, neither walk after other " gods to your hurt: then will I cauſe you to dwell " in this place." And ver. 8, 9, 10. " Behold, " ye truſt in lying words that cannot profit. Will " ye ſteal, murder, and commit adultery, and ſwear " falſly, and burn incenſe unto Baal, and walk af- " ter other gods, whom ye know not: and come " and ſtand before me in this houſe, which is call- " ed by my name, and ſay, we are delivered to do " all theſe abominations?" This was to add impudence to all their other impieties, to think that the worſhip of GOD, and his holy temple did excuſe theſe groſs crimes and immoralities. Micah. vi. 6, 7, 8. There GOD repreſents the Jews, as deſirous to pleaſe GOD at any rate, provided their luſts and vices might be ſpared, and they might not be obliged to amend and reform their lives. " Wherewith " ſhall I come before the LORD, and bow my ſelf " before the high GOD? Shall I come before him " with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? " Will the LORD be pleaſed with thouſands of rams, " and with ten thouſands of rivers of oyl? Shall I " give my firſt-born for my tranſgreſſions, the fruit " of my body for the ſin of my ſoul?" All this they would willingly do: but all this will not do without real virtue and goodneſs, " he hath ſhewed " thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the " LORD require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to " love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD?"

And in the time of our bleſſed SAVIOUR, thoſe who pretended to be moſt devout among the Jews, were wholly buſied about their pretended traditions of waſhing of hands, and the outſides of their cups

and

and diſhes, and about the external and leſſer things of the law, the tything of mint, and aniſe, and cummin and all manner of herbs, omitting in the mean time the weightier matters of the law, "judgment, "mercy, and faith, and the love of GOD," as our SAVIOUR deſcribes their religion, Matth. xxiii. 23. SERM. CCVIII.

And after the clear revelation of the goſpel, the beſt and moſt perfect inſtitution that ever was, in the very beginning of chriſtianity, what licentious doctrines did their creep in, "turning the grace of GOD "into laſciviouſneſs," and releaſing men from all moral duties, and the virtues of a good life? "by "reaſon whereof the way of truth was evil ſpoken "of," as St. Peter, and St. Jude expreſly tell us, concerning the ſect of the Gnoſticks. And St. John likewiſe deſcribes the ſame ſect by their arrogant pretences to extraordinary knowledge and illumination, whilſt they walked in darkneſs, and allowed themſelves in all manner of wickedneſs of life; they pretended to perfection and righteouſneſs, without keeping the commandments of GOD.

And in the next following age of chriſtianity, how was it peſtered with a trifling controverſy about the time of the obſervation of Eaſter, and with endleſs diſputes and niceties about the doctrine of the Trinity, and the two natures and wills of CHRIST! by which means the practice of chriſtianity was greatly neglected, and the main end and deſign of that excellent religion almoſt quite defeated and loſt.

After this, when the myſtery of iniquity began to ſhew itſelf, in the degeneracy of the Roman church from her primitive ſanctity and purity, and in the affectation of an undue and boundleſs power over other churches, the chriſtian religion began to be over-run with ſuperſtition, and the primitive fervour

of

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of piety and devotion was turned into a fierce zeal and contention about matters of no moment and importance; of which we have a moſt remarkable inſtance here in our own nation, when Auſtin the monk arrived here to convert the nation, and preach the Goſpel amongſt us, as the church of Rome pretended; but againſt all faith and truth of hiſtory, which aſſures us that chriſtianity was planted here among the Britains ſeveral ages before, and perhaps ſooner than even at Rome itſelf; and not only ſo, but had got conſiderable footing among the Saxons before Auſtin the monk ever ſet foot amongſt us; I ſay, when Auſtin the monk arrived here, the two great points of his chriſtianity, were to bring the Britains to a conformity with the church of Rome in the time of Eaſter, and in the tonſure and ſhaving of the prieſts, after the manner of St. Peter, as they pretended, upon the crown of the head, and not of St. Paul, which was by ſhaving or cutting cloſe the hair of the whole head, as from ſome vain and fooliſh tradition he pretended to have learned: the promoting of theſe two cuſtoms was his great errand and buſineſs, and the zeal of his preaching was ſpent upon theſe two fundamental points; in which after very barbarous and bloody doings, he at laſt prevailed. And this is the converſion of England, ſo much boaſted of by the church of Rome, and for which this Auſtin is magnified for ſo great a ſaint; when it is very evident from the hiſtory of thoſe times, that he was a proud, ignorant, turbulent, and cruel man, who inſtead of firſt converting the nation to the faith of CHRIST, confounded the purity and ſimplicity of the chriſtian religion, which had been planted and eſtabliſhed among us long before.

In latter ages, when the man of ſin was grown up

to

to his full ſtature, the great buſineſs of religion was the pope's abſolute and univerſal authority over all Chriſtians, even kings and princes, in order to ſpiritual matters; eccleſiaſtical liberties and immunities; and the exemption of the clergy, and all matters belonging to them, from the cognizance of the ſecular power; the great points which Tho. a Becket contended ſo earneſtly for, calling it the cauſe of CHRIST, and in the maintenance whereof he perſiſted to the death, and was canonized as a ſaint and a martyr. And among the people, their piety conſiſted in the promoting of monkery, and founding and endowing monaſteries; in infinite ſuperſtitions, fooliſh doctrines, and more abſurd miracles to confirm them; in purchaſing indulgencies with money, and hearing of maſſes for the redemption of ſouls out of purgatory; in the idolatrous worſhip of ſaints and their relicks and images, and eſpecially of the bleſſed virgin, which at laſt grew to that height, as to make up the greateſt part of their worſhip and devotion both publick and private. And indeed they have brought matters to that abſurd paſs, that one may truly ſay, that the whole buſineſs of their devotion is to teach men to worſhip images, and images to worſhip GOD. For to be preſent at divine ſervice and prayer celebrated in an unknown tongue, is not the worſhip of men and reaſonable creatures, but of ſtatues and images, who though they be preſent in the place where this ſervice is performed, yet they bear no part in it, being void of all ſenſe and underſtanding of what is done. And indeed in their whole religion, ſuch as it is, they drive ſo ſtrict a bargain with GOD, and treat him in ſo arrogant a manner, by their inſolent doctrine of the merit of good works, as if GOD were as much beholden to them for their

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ſervice and obedience, as they are to him for the reward of it, which they challenge as of right and juſtice belonging to them. Nay, ſo high have they carried this doctrine, as to pretend not only to merit eternal life for themſelves, but to do a great deal more in works of ſupererogation, for the benefit and advantage of others; that is, when they have done as much as in ſtrict duty they are obliged to, and thereby paid down a valuable conſideration for heaven, and as much as in equal juſtice between GOD and man it is worth, their ſurpluſage of their good works they put as a debt upon GOD, and as ſo many bills of credit laid up in the treaſury of the church, which the pope by his pardons and indulgencies may diſpenſe and place to whoſe account he pleaſeth. And thus by one device or other they have enervated the chriſtian religion to that degree, that it has quite loſt it's virtue and efficacy upon the hearts and lives of men; and inſtead of the fruits of real goodneſs and righteouſneſs, it produceth little elſe but ſuperſtition and folly; or if it bring forth any fruits of charity, it is either ſo miſ-placed upon theſe chimeras (as hiring of prieſts to ſay ſo many maſſes for the dead, to redeem their ſouls out of purgatory) that it ſignifies nothing; or elſe the virtue of it is ſpoiled by the arrogant pretence of meriting by it. So apt have men always been to deceive themſelves by an affected miſtake of any thing for religion, but that which really and in truth is ſo. And this is that which the apoſtle St. Paul foretold would be the great miſcarriage of the laſt times, that under a great pretence of religion men ſhould be deſtitute of all goodneſs, and abandoned to all wickedneſs and vice, "having a form of godlineſs, but denying the power of it," 2 Tim. iii. 5.

And

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And though things have been much better ſince that happy reformation from the corruptions and errors of popery, yet even among proteſtants the malice and craft of the devil hath prevailed ſo far, as to undermine, in a great meaſure, the neceſſity of a good life, by thoſe luſcious doctrines of the Antinomians, concerning free grace, and the juſtification of a ſinner merely upon a confident perſuaſion of his being in a ſtate of grace and favour with GOD, and conſequently that the goſpel diſchargeth men from obedience to the laws of GOD, and all manner of obligation to the virtues of a good life; which doctrines, how falſe and abſurd ſoever in themſelves, and pernicious in their conſequences, did not only prevail very much in Germany, a little after the beginning of the reformation, but have ſince got too much footing in other places, and been too far entertained and cheriſhed by ſome good men, who were not ſufficiently aware of the error and danger of them. But bleſſed be GOD, the doctrine of our church, both in the articles and homilies of it, hath been preſerved pure and free from all error and corruption in this matter on either hand, aſſerting the neceſſity of good works, and yet renouncing the merit of them in that arrogant ſenſe, in which the church of Rome does teach and aſſert it; and ſo teaching juſtification by faith, and the free grace of GOD in JESUS CHRIST, as to maintain the indiſpenſable neceſſity of the virtues of a good life.

And thus I have done with the firſt reaſon, why it is ſo fit and neceſſary to preſs frequently upon Chriſtians the indiſpenſable neceſſity of the virtues of a good life, viz. becauſe men are and have ever been ſo very apt to deceive themſelves in this matter, and ſo hardly brought to that wherein religion mainly conſiſts, viz. the practice of real goodneſs. I ſhall be brief upon the II. Rea-

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II. Reaſon, namely, becauſe of the indiſpenſable neceſſity of the thing to render us capable of the divine favour and acceptance, and of the reward of eternal life. And this added to the former, makes the reaſon full and ſtrong. For if men be ſo apt to decieve themſelves in this matter, and to be deceived in it be a matter of ſuch dangerous conſequence, then it is highly neceſſary to inculcate this frequently upon Chriſtians, that no man may be miſtaken in a matter of ſo much danger, and upon which his eternal happineſs depends. Now if obedience to the laws of GOD, and the practice of virtue and good works be neceſſary to our continuance in a ſtate of grace and favour with GOD, and to our final juſtification by our abſolution at the great day, if nothing but holineſs obedience can qualify us for the bleſſed ſight of GOD, and the glorious reward of eternal happineſs; then it is matter of infinite conſequence to us, not to be miſtaken in a matter of ſo great importance; but that we "work out our ſalvation with fear and "and trembling," and "give all diligence to make "our calling and election ſure," by "adding to "our faith and knowledge, the virtues of a good "life:" that "by patient continuance in well-do-"ing, we ſeek for glory, and honour, and immor-"tality, and eternal life;" and that we ſo demean our ſelves "in all holy converſation and godlineſs," as that we may with comfort and confidence "wait for "the bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearance of "the great GOD, and our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST; "who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem "us from all iniquity, and purify to himſelf a pecu-"liar people zealous of good works." That this is indiſpenſably neceſſary to our happineſs, I have in my former diſcourſe ſhewn at large, from the great end

and

and deſign of religion in general, and of the chriſti- SERM. CCVIII.
an religion in particular, from the whole deſign and doctrine of the goſpel, from the conſtant tenour of the bible, and from the nature and reaſon of the thing.

I know it hath been the great deſign of the devil and his inſtruments, in all ages, to undermine religion, by making an unhappy ſeparation and divorce between godlineſs and morality, between faith and the virtues of a good life; and by this means not only to weaken and abate, but even wholly to deſtroy the force and efficacy of the chriſtian religion, and to leave men as much under the power of the devil and their luſts, as if there were no ſuch thing as chriſtianity in the world. But let us not deceive our ſelves; this was always religion, and the condition of our acceptance with GOD, to endeavour to be like GOD in purity and holineſs, in juſtice and righteouſneſs, in mercy and goodneſs, "to ceaſe to do evil, and "to learn to do well." And this you will find to be the conſtant doctrine of the holy ſcriptures, from the beginning of the bible to the end. Gen. iv. 7. "If thou "doeſt well, ſhalt thou not be accepted?" Pſal. xv. 1, 2. "LORD, who ſhall abide in thy tabernacle? "who ſhall dwell upon thy holy hill? He that walk- "eth uprightly, and worketh righteouſneſs, and "ſpeaketh the truth from his heart." Pſal. l. 23. "To him that ordereth his converſation aright, will "I ſhew the ſalvation of GOD." Iſa. i. 16, 17, 18. "Waſh ye, make you clean, put away the evil of "your doings from before mine eyes, ceaſe to do "evil, learn to do well, ſeek judgment, relieve the "oppreſſed, judge the fatherleſs, plead for the wi- "dow. Come now, and let us reaſon together, ſaith "the LORD. Though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they "ſhall be as white as ſnow." Iſa. iii. 10, 11. "Say

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" ye to the righteous, that it ſhall be well with him: " for they ſhall eat the fruit of their doings. Wo unto " the wicked, it ſhall be ill with him: for the reward " of his hands ſhall be given him." Mich. vi. 8. " He " hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good; and what " doth the LORD require of thee, but to do juſtly, to " love mercy, and to walk humly with thy GOD?"

And our bleſſed SAVIOUR, in his ſermon upon the mount, tells us plainly what manner of perſons we muſt be, if ever we hope to be happy, and to enter into the kingdom of GOD; and wherein his religion conſiſts, in righteouſneſs, and purity, and meekneſs, and patience, and peaceableneſs; and declares moſt expreſly, that if we hope for happineſs upon any other terms than the practice of theſe virtues, we " build " upon the ſand." Acts x. 34. " Of a truth I per- " ceive," ſays St. Peter there, " that GOD is no re- " ſpecter of perſons; but in every nation, he that fear- " eth GOD, and worketh righteouſneſs, is accepted " with him." Gal. vi. 7, 8. " Be not deceived, GOD " is not mocked: for whatſoever a man ſoweth, that " ſhall he alſo reap: for he that ſoweth to the fleſh, " ſhall of the fleſh reap corruption; but he that ſow- " eth to the Spirit, ſhall of the Spirit reap life ever- " laſting." Eph. v. 6. " Let no man deceive you " with vain words: for becauſe of theſe things com- " eth the wrath of GOD upon the children of diſobe- " dience." 1 John iii. 7. " Little children let no man " deceive you. He that doth righteouſneſs is righteous, " even as he is righteous." And here in the text, " This is a faithful ſaying, &c. Theſe things are " good and profitable to men," acceptable to God, and honourable to religion, and the only way and means to eternal life, through the mercy and merits of JESUS CHRIST our bleſſed LORD and SAVIOUR.

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SERMON CCIX.

Of the neceſſity of good works.

TIT. iii. 8.

This is a faithful ſaying, and theſe things I will that thou affirm conſtantly, that they which have believed in GOD, *might be careful to maintain good works. Theſe things are good and profitable unto men.*

SERM. CCIX. The third ſermon on this text.

I Come now to the ſecond thing I propoſed, which was to anſwer an objection or two, to which the preaching in this kind of doctrine may ſeem liable.

Firſt, that this is to advance and ſet up morality.

Secondly, that this ſeems to contradict St. Paul's doctrine of "juſtification by the free Grace of GOD "in JESUS CHRIST," and "by faith without the "works of the law." I ſhall endeavour to anſwer both theſe.

Firſt, that this is to advance and ſet up morality. To which I anſwer two things.

I. That if by morality men mean counterfeit virtue, and the ſpecious ſhew of juſtice, and charity, and meekneſs, or any other virtue, without the truth and reality of them, without an inward principle of love to GOD and goodneſs, out of oſtentation and vain-glory, or for ſome other by and ſiniſter end, ſuch as probably were the virtues of many heathens, and it is to be feared of too many Chriſtians; if this be that which the objectors mean by morality, then we do aſſure them that we preach up no ſuch morality, but thoſe vir-

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virtues only which are ſincere and ſubſtantial and real, the principle and root whereof is the love of GOD and goodneſs, and the end the honour and glory of GOD, and a neceſſary ingredient whereof is ſincerity and truth. It is righteouſneſs and true holineſs, the ſincere love of GOD and our neighbour, real meekneſs, and patience, and humility, and ſobriety, and chaſtity, and not the glittering ſhew and appearance, the vain and effected oſtentation of any of theſe virtues, which we perſuade and preſs men ſo earneſtly to endeavour after.

Not that I believe that all virtues of the heathen were counterfeit and deſtitute of an inward principle of goodneſs; GOD forbid that we ſhould paſs ſo hard a judgment upon thoſe excellent men, Socrates, and Epictetus, and Antoninus, and ſeveral others, who ſincerely endeavoured to live up to the light and law of nature, and took ſo much pains to cultivate and raiſe their minds, to govern and ſubdue the irregularity of their ſenſual appetites and brutiſh paſſions, to purify and refine their manners, and to excel in all virtue and goodneſs. Theſe were glorious lights in thoſe dark times, and ſo much the better for being good under ſo many diſadvantages, as the ignorance and prejudice of their education, the multitude of evil examples continually in their view, and the powerful temptation of the contrary cuſtoms and faſhions of the generality of mankind.

Nor were they wholly deſtitute of an inward principle of goodneſs: for though they had not that powerful grace and aſſiſtance of GOD's holy Spirit which is promiſed and afforded to all ſincere Chriſtians (as neither had the Jews, who were the peculiar people of GOD, and in covenant with him) yet it is very credible, that ſuch perſons were under a ſpecial care and provi-

providence of GOD, and not wholly deſtitute of divine aſſiſtance, no more than Job and his friends, mentioned in the old teſtament, and Cornelius in the new, who ſurely were very good men, and accepted of GOD, though they were Gentiles, and "aliens "from the common-wealth of Iſrael, and ſtrangers "from the covenant of promiſe;" but yet not excluded from the bleſſing of the Meſſias, though they were ignorant of him, as many of the Jews likewiſe were, nor from the benefit of that great propitiation, which in the fulneſs of time he was to make for the ſins of the whole world. SERM. CCIX.

So that there is no need ſo uncharitably to conclude (as ſome of the antients have done, not all, nor the moſt antient of them neither) that there were no good men among the heathen, and that the brighteſt of their virtues were counterfeit, and only in ſhew and appearance. For there might be ſeveral good men among the Gentiles, in the ſame condition that Cornelius was before he became a Chriſtian; of whom it is ſaid, whilſt he was yet a Gentile, that "he was a "devout man, and feared GOD, and that his prayer "and his alms were accepted of GOD," a certain ſign that they were not counterfeit. And if he had died in that condition, before CHRIST had been revealed to him, I do not ſee what reaſonable cauſe of doubt there can be concerning his Salvation; and yet it is a moſt certain and inviolable truth, that "there is no "other name under heaven given among men, where-"by we muſt be ſaved, but the name of JESUS; "neither is there ſalvation in any other." And good men in all ages and nations from the beginning of the world, both before the law, and under the law, and without the law, ſuch as "feared GOD, and wrought "righteouſneſs," were accepted of him in that name,

SERM. CCIX. and by the meritorious ſacrifice of that Lamb of God, which in reſpect of the virtue and efficacy of it, is ſaid to have been "ſlain from the foundation of the "world."

II. But if by moral virtues be meant thoſe which concern the manners of men, from whence they ſeem to have taken their name, and which are in truth the duties commanded and enjoined by the natural or moral law, and are comprehended under thoſe two great commands (as our bleſſed SAVIOUR calls them) "the love of GOD, and our neighbour;" I ſay, if this be the meaning of it, than we do advance this kind of morality, as that which is the primary and ſubſtantial part of all religion, and moſt ſtrictly enjoined by the chriſtian. To which purpoſe our SAVIOUR tells us, Matt. v. 17. That "he was not come "to deſtroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil "them." And ver. 19. "Whoſoever therefore "ſhall break one of the leaſt of theſe commandments, "and teach men ſo, ſhall be called the leaſt in the "kingdom of heaven; but whoſoever ſhall do and "teach them, ſhall be called great in the kingdom "of heaven;" that is, under the diſpenſation of the goſpel. So that this is a principal part of the chriſtian religion, to teach and practiſe the duties of the moral law. This the Phariſees were defective in, placing their religion in external and little things, but neglecting the great duties of morality, "the weightier "matters of the law, mercy, and judgment, and "fidelity, and the love of GOD." And therefore he adds, ver. 20. "I ſay unto you, except your "righteouſneſs exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes "and Phariſees, ye ſhall in no caſe enter into the king-"dom of heaven." Is it not poſſible in more expreſs and emphatical words to enjoin the obſervation

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of the duties of the moral law. And then for that great principle and rule of moral juſtice, "to do to all men, "as we would have them to do to us." Our SAVIOUR enjoins it as an eſſential part of religion, and the ſum and ſubſtance of our whole duty to our neighbour, and of all the particular precepts contained in the law and the prophets, Matt. vii. 12. "Therefore all "things whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to "you, do ye even ſo to them: for this is the law "and the prophets." And St. Paul moſt expreſly declares, that he was ſo far from weakning or making void the obligation of the law by his doctrine of juſtification by faith, that he did thereby confirm and eſtabliſh it, Rom. iii. 31. "Do we then make void "the law through faith? GOD forbid; yea we eſta-"bliſh the law."

So that moral duties and virtues are the ſame with chriſtian graces, and with that holineſs and righteouſneſs which the goſpel requires, and differ only in name and notion. They are called virtues, with relation to the intrinſical nature and goodneſs of them, and graces, with reſpect to the principle from which they flow, being the fruits and effects of the gracious operation of the Spirit of GOD upon our minds. And it hath been a very ill ſervice to religion to decry morality, as ſome have done, not conſidering that moral duties are of primary obligation, and bound upon us by the law of nature; and that chriſtianity hath reinforced and ſeconded the obligation of them by more powerful motives and encouragements. But I proceed to the

Second objection, viz. that this diſcourſe ſeems to be contrary to St. Paul's doctrine "of juſtification "by the free grace of GOD in JESUS CHRIST, by "faith without the works of the law."

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To which I anſwer, that St. Paul, when he does ſo vehemently and frequently aſſert "juſtification by the "free grace of GOD," and "by faith, without the "works of the law," does not thereby exclude the neceſſity of works of righteouſneſs and obedience to the moral precepts of the goſpel, as the condition of our continuance in the favour of GOD, and of our final and perfect juſtification and abſolution by the ſentence of the great day; but on the contrary, does every where declare the neceſſity of a holy and virtuous life to this purpoſe. And this is moſt plainly the tenor and current of his doctrine throughout all his epiſtles. But whenever he contends that we "are "juſtified by faith without works," he denies one of theſe three things.

1. That the obſervation of the law of Moſes is neceſſary to our juſtification and ſalvation. And this he does in oppoſition to thoſe who troubled the chriſtian church, by teaching, that it was ſtill neceſſary to Chriſtians to keep the law of Moſes; and that unleſs they did ſo, they could not be ſaved; of which we have a full account given, Acts xv. And this for the moſt part is the meaning of that aſſertion, ſo frequent in his epiſtles to the Romans, and the Galatians, that "we are not juſtified by the works of the "law, but by the faith of CHRIST." And this is very evident from the tenor of his reaſoning about this matter, in which he does ſo frequently urge this argument, and inſiſt ſo ſtrongly upon it, viz. That men were juſtified before the law of Moſes was given, for which he inſtances in Abraham, and therefore the obſervance of that law cannot be neceſſary to a man's juſtification and ſalvation.

2. Sometimes he, in his diſcourſe upon this argument, denies the merit of any works of obedience

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nd righteouſneſs to gain the favour and acceptance of GOD; ſo that we cannot challenge any thing of GOD as "of debt," and as "a ground of boaſting," but we owe all to the free grace and mercy of GOD; and when we have done our beſt, have done but our duty. And this he likewiſe frequently inſiſts upon in is epiſtle to the Romans, in oppoſition to an arrogant opinion, common among the Jews, of the merit of good works, and that GOD was indebted to hem for their obedience. In this ſenſe he ſays, Rom. v. 4. "Now to him that worketh is the reward 'reckoned, not of grace but of debt;" that is, he hat claims juſtification, and the reward of eternal ife, as due to him for his obedience, does not aſcribe t to the free grace of GOD, but challengeth it as a lebt due to him.

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3. Sometimes he denies the neceſſity of any works of righteouſneſs, antecedently to our firſt juſtification, and being received into a ſtate of grace and favour with GOD; and aſſerts on the contrary, that by he faith of CHRIST, and ſincerely embracing the hriſtian religion, men are juſtified, and though they were never ſo great ſinners before, all their paſt ſins are forgiven, and GOD is perfectly reconciled to hem; in which ſenſe he ſays, Chap. iv. 5. "That 'GOD juſtifies the ungodly upon their believing." So that whatever ſins they were guilty of before, and hough they never did any one good action in their ives, yet if they ſincerely embrace the chriſtian religion, and thereby engage themſelves to reform their lives, and to obey the precepts of the goſpel for the future, GOD will thereupon receive them into his favour, and pardon the ſins of their former lives. And n this epiſtle to Titus, ch. iii. 5, 7. immediately before the text, "Not by works of righteouſneſs which

SERM. CCIX. "we have done, but according to his mercy he ſaved "us, by the waſhing of regeneration, and by the re-"newing of the holy Ghoſt: that being juſtified by "his grace, we ſhould be made heirs according to the "hopes of eternal life;" that is, though their former life had been very bad, (as he deſcribes it before, ver. 3. "for we our ſelves were ſometimes fooliſh, diſo-"bedient, ſerving divers luſts and pleaſures, living in "malice, and envy, and hatred of one another)" I ſay, notwithſtanding this, though they had done no works of righteouſneſs, but the contrary, yet upon their ſolemn profeſſion of chriſtianity at their baptiſm, and declaration of their repentance, and engagements to live better, they were "juſtified freely by GOD's "grace" and "ſaved by his mercy." But then he does not ſay, that after this ſolemn profeſſion of chriſtianity works of righteouſneſs were not neceſſary to continue them in this ſtate of grace and favour with GOD, but quite contrary, he plainly declares the neceſſity of them in the very next words; "this is "a faithful ſaying, &c."

And the conſideration of this will fully reconcile the ſeeming difference between St. Paul and St. James, in this matter of juſtification. St. Paul affirms that a ſinner is at firſt juſtified, and received into the favour of GOD, by a ſincere profeſſion of the chriſtian faith, without any works of righteouſneſs preceding. St. James affirms, that no man continues in a juſtified ſtate, and in favour with GOD, whoſe faith doth not bring forth good works, and that it is not a true and lively faith which doth not approve and ſhew itſelf to be ſo, by the works of obedience and a good life. James ii. 14. "What doth it profit a "man, my brethren, if a man ſay that he hath faith, "and hath not works; can faith ſave him?" And

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ver. 17. "Faith if it have not works is dead, being "alone." And ver. 20. he repeats it again, "know, "O vain man, that faith without works is dead." And ver. 22. ſpeaking of Abraham, "Seeſt thou "how faith wrought with his works, and by works "was faith made perfect." And ver. 26. "For as "the body without the ſpirit is dead, ſo faith with-"out works is dead alſo." The ſum and reſult of all which is this, that though we be juſtified at firſt by faith without works preceding, yet faith without good works following it will not finally juſtify and ſave us; nay indeed, that faith which does not bring forth the fruits of a good life, was never a true, and living, and perfect faith; but pretended, and dead, and imperfect, and therefore can juſtify no man; and he that hath only ſuch a faith, does but make an empty and ineffectual profeſſion, but is really deſtitute of the true faith of the goſpel. SERM. CCIX.

And this is agreeable to that explication which was given by our firſt reformers here in England, of the nature of juſtifying faith, "that it is not a mere "perſuaſion of the truths of natural and revealed re-"ligion, but ſuch a belief as begets a ſubmiſſion to "the will of GOD, and hath hope, love, and obe-"dience to GOD's commandments joined to it. "That this is the faith which in baptiſm is profeſ-"ſed, from which Chriſtians are called the faithful; "and that in thoſe ſcriptures, where it is ſaid, we "are juſtified by faith, we may not think that we "be juſtified by faith, as it is a ſeparate virtue from "hope and charity, the fear of GOD and repentance, "but by it is meant faith, neither only nor alone, "but with the foreſaid virtues, containing an engage-"ment of obedience to the whole doctrine and re-"ligion of CHRIST. And that although all that

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" are juſtified, muſt of neceſſity have charity, as " well as faith, yet neither faith nor charity are the " worthineſs and merit of our juſtification, but that " is to be aſcribed only to our SAVIOUR CHRIST, " who was offered upon the croſs for our ſins, and " roſe again for our juſtification;" as may be ſeen more at large in a treatiſe publiſhed at the beginning of our reformation, upon this and ſome other points. And I do not ſee what can be ſaid upon this point with more clearneſs and weight.

All the application I ſhall make of this diſcourſe, ſhall be briefly this; that if we be convinced of the neceſſity of the virtues of a good life to all that profeſs themſelves Chriſtians, we would ſeriouſly and in good earneſt ſet about the practice of them: If " this " be a faithful ſaying," then I am ſure it greatly concerns us to be careful of our lives and actions, and that " our converſation be as becometh the goſpel of CHRIST;" becauſe if this be true, there is no poſſible way to reconcile a wicked life, no, nor a wilful neglect and violation of any of the duties and laws of chriſtianity, with the hopes of heaven and eternal life. In this the ſcripture is poſitive and peremptory, that " every man that hath this hope in him, muſt " purify himſelf, even as he is pure:" that " with- " out holineſs no man ſhall ſee the LORD: but if " we have our fruit unto holineſs, our end ſhall be " everlaſting life."

And here I might particularly recommend to your careful practice, the great virtues of chriſtianity; thoſe which St. Paul tells us are the proper and genuine fruits of the ſpirit of CHRIST, " love, joy, peace, " long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs, fidelity, meek- " neſs, temperance." But I have not time to inſiſt particularly upon them. I ſhall content myſelf briefly to mention thoſe duties, which the apoſtle in this

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piſthe doth more eſpecially preſs upon the ſeveral conditions and relations of men. Thoſe who are teachers and inſtructors of others, that they would not only be careful "to preach ſound doctrine, but "in all things to ſhew themſelves patterns of good works." Thoſe who are ſubject to others, and under their government, that they would pay all duty and obedience to their ſuperiors, as children to their parents, ſervants to their maſters, that they may "adorn the doctrine of GOD our SAVIOUR in all "things," as the apoſtle ſpeaks, chap. ii. ver. 10. And ſo likewiſe thoſe who are ſubjects, that they live in all peaceable and humble obedience to princes and magiſtrates. This our apoſtle ſpeaks of as a great duty of chriſtian religion, and reckons it among good works, chap. iii. 1. "Put them in mind to be ſubject "to principalities and powers, and to obey magi- "ſtrates, and to be ready to every good work."

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And then thoſe who are of an inferior condition, that they labour and be diligent in the work of an honeſt calling, for this is privately good and profitable unto men, and to their families; and thoſe who are above this neceſſity, and are in a better capacity, to maintain good works properly ſo called, works of piety, and charity, and juſtice; that they be careful to promote and advance them, according to their power and opportunity, becauſe theſe things are publickly good and beneficial to mankind. And beſides this, (as St. Peter exhorts, 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, &c.) "And beſides this, giving all diligence, add to your "faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to "knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, pa- "tience; and to patience, godlineſs; and to godli- "neſs, brotherly kindneſs; and to brotherly kind- "neſs, charity. For if theſe things be in you, and "abound,

SERM. CCIX. "abound, they make you that you ſhall neither be "barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our "LORD JESUS CHRIST. But he that lacketh theſe "things is blind, and cannot ſee afar off, and hath "forgotten that he was purged from his old ſins;" that is, doth not conſider that the deſign of chriſtianity is to renew and reform the hearts and lives of men. "Wherefore the rather, brethren," as he goes on, "give diligence to make your calling and "election ſure; for if ye do theſe things, ye ſhall "never fall. For ſo an entrance ſhall be miniſtred "unto you abundantly, into the everlaſting kingdom "of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST."

I will conclude all with that excellent ſaying of St. Paul in his epiſtle to Titus, which ſo fully declares to us the great deſign, and the proper efficacy of the chriſtian doctrine upon the minds and manners of men; chap. ii. 11, 12, 13. "For the grace of "GOD that bringeth ſalvation, hath appeared to all "men, teaching us, that denying ungodlineſs and "worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, "and godly in this preſent world: looking for that "bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearance of the "great GOD and our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

"To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, "be all glory and honour now and for ever," Amen.

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SERMON CCX.

Of doing all to the glory of God.

1 COR. x. 31.

Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatſoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

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THESE words are a general concluſion inferred from a particular caſe, which the apoſtle had been diſcourſing of before; and that we may the better underſtand the meaning of this general rule, it will not be amiſs to look back a little upon the particular caſe the apoſtle was ſpeaking of; and that was concerning the partaking of things offered to idols; and that in two caſes; either by partaking of the idol-feaſts in their temples, after the ſacrifices; or by partaking of things offered to idols, whether they were bought by Chriſtians in the market, or ſet before them at a private entertainment, to which by ſome heathens they were invited.

The firſt he condems as abſolutely unlawful: the other not as unlawful in itſelf, but in ſome circumſtances, upon the account of ſcandal.

The firſt caſe he ſpeaks of from ver. 14. to the 23. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, flee from "idolatry. I ſpeak to wiſe men: judge ye what I "ſay." As if he had ſaid, you may eaſily apprehend what it is I am going to caution you againſt. And firſt he tells them in general, that they who communicated in the worſhip of any deity, or in any kind of ſacrifice offered to him, did, in ſo doing, own and acknowledge that for a deity. To this purpoſe

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poſe he inſtanceth in communicating in the chriſtian ſacrament, and in the jewiſh ſacrifices, ver. 16, 17, 18. "The cup of bleſſing which we bleſs, is it not "the communion of the blood of CHRIST? The "bread which we break, is it not the communion of "the body of CHRIST? For we being many are "one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers "of that one bread. Behold Iſrael after the fleſh;" (that is, the Jews) "are not they which eat of the "ſacrifices, partakers of the altar?" Thus it is in the chriſtian, and the jewiſh worſhip. And the caſe is the ſame, if any man partake of the idol-feaſts in their temples. This he does not expreſs, but takes it for granted they underſtood what this diſcourſe aimed at.

And then he anſwers an argument, which it ſeems was made uſe of by ſome, particularly the Gnoſticks, of whom the apoſtle ſpeaks, chap. viii. and that was this. If an idol be nothing, and conſequently things ſacrificed to idols were not to be conſidered as ſacrifices, then it was lawful to partake of the idol-feaſts, which were celebrated in their temples. And that the apoſtle ſpeaks of theſe, is plain from his diſcourſe againſt the Gnoſticks, who made uſe of this argument for the lawfulneſs of communicating at the idol-feaſts, chap. viii. ver. 4. "as concerning therefore "the eating of things which are offered in ſacrifice "unto idols; we know that an idol is nothing in "the world, &c." And ver. 10. "if any man ſee "thee which haſt knowledge" (alluding to the very name of Gnoſticks) "if any man ſee thee which haſt "knowledge, ſit at meat in an idol temple."

This then is that partaking of idol-feaſts, which the apoſtle here ſpeaks of, which they pretended to be lawful, becauſe an idol is nothing. This, ſays the apoſtle,

apoſtle, I know as well as you, that an idol is no real deity, but for all that the devil is really worſhiped and ſerved by this means, ver. 20. "But I "ſay, that the things which the Gentiles ſacrifice, "they ſacrifice to devils, and not to GOD, and I "would not that ye ſhould have fellowſhip with "devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the LORD, "and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of "the LORD's table, and the table of devils."

Having declared this way of partaking of things offered to idols to be unlawful in itſelf, and a virtual renouncing of chriſtianity; then he proceeds to the conſideration of the other caſe, of eating of things offered to idols out of their temples, which might happen ſeveral ways. Sometimes being ſold by the prieſts, they were expoſed to ſale in the market. Sometimes the heathens carried ſome remainders of the ſacrifices to their houſes, and inviting the Chriſtians to a feaſt, might ſet theſe meats before them; what ſhould Chriſtians do in either of theſe caſes?

Firſt, he determines in general, that out of the temples it was lawful to eat theſe things, becauſe in ſo doing they communicated in no act of worſhip with the heathens; it is lawful, he ſays, in itſelf; but becauſe it might be harmful to others, and give ſcandal, in ſuch circumſtances it became unlawful by accident. Ver. 23. "All things are lawful to me, "but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful "for me, but all things edify not." Things which are lawful in themſelves, may in ſome caſes be very dangerous and deſtructive to others, and we ſhould not only conſider our ſelves, but others alſo. "Let no "man ſeek his own: but every man another's wel-"fare." And then he comes to the particular caſes. "Whatever is ſold in the ſhambles, that eat, aſk-

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" ing no queſtion for conſcience ſake: for the earth " is the LORD's, and the fulneſs thereof." We may take theſe things from GOD's hand, who is the true LORD of them and of all creatures. For this reaſon we may without ſcrupulous enquiry, uſe thoſe meats which are publickly expoſed to ſale.

And ſo likewiſe in the other caſe, if we be invited to the table of an heathen, we may eat what is ſet before us, without enquiring whether it be part of an idol-ſacrifice. But if any man tell us, that this meat was offered in ſacrifice to idols, in that caſe we ought to abſtain from eating of it, " for his ſake that ſhew- " ed it, and for conſcience ſake;" that is, out of regard to the opinion of thoſe, who think theſe meats unlawful: " for the earth is the LORD's, and the " fulneſs thereof." Alſo in another ſenſe, GOD hath made ſuch abundant proviſion for us, that we may abſtain from this or that meat without any great inconvenience. " Conſcience, I ſay, not thine own " but another's." He had ſaid before, we ſhould " eat of what was ſet before us, aſking no queſtion " for conſcience ſake;" that is, not making it a matter of conſcience to ourſelves: now he ſays, if we be told it was offered to an idol, we ſhould " not eat " for conſcience ſake;" that is, not as making a matter of conſcience of it to ourſelves, but out of regard to " the conſcience of another," to whom it might be a ſcandal. " For why is my liberty judg- " ed of another man's conſcience? and if I with " thankſgiving be a partaker, why am I evil ſpoken " of for that which I give thanks?" that is, why ſhould another man's conſcience be a prejudice to my liberty? If another makes conſcience of it as unlawful, why ſhould his conſcience govern mine, and make me think ſo too; or why ſhould I be evil ſpoken of,

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thinking it lawful to eat any thing ſet before me, SERM. CCX.
which I give thanks? This is a little obſcure; but
plain meaning of the apoſtle's reaſoning ſeems to
this; though I have that regard to another man's
k conſcience, as to abſtain from eating what he
ks unlawful, yet am I not therefore bound to be
is opinion, and think it unlawful in itſelf: I will
ſider his weakneſs ſo far as to forbear that which
n perſuaded is lawful to do, but yet I will ſtill pre-
re the liberty of my own judgment; and as I am
tent to give no ſcandal to him, ſo I expect that he
uld not cenſure and condemn me for thinking that
ful, which he believes not to be ſo: and then from
this diſcourſe, the apoſtle eſtabliſheth this general
e in the text, "Wherefore, whether ye eat or
rink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of
GOD." To which is parallel that other text,
et. iv. 11. "That GOD in all things may be glori-
ied" So that this general rule lays a duty upon
Chriſtians of deſigning the glory of GOD in all
ir actions. All the difficulty is, what is here
ant by this of doing all things "to the glory of
GOD." The Jews have a common ſaying, which
ms to be parallel with this phraſe of the apoſtle,
that all things ſhould be done in the name of
GOD." And this they make ſo eſſential to every
od action, that it was a received principle among
m, that he who obeys any command of GOD, and
t in his name, ſhall receive no reward. Now that
do things in the name of GOD, and to do them to
glory, are but ſeveral phraſes ſignifying the ſame
ing, is evident from that precept of the apoſtle,
l. iii. 17. "And whatſoever ye do in word, or in
deed, do all in the name of the LORD JESUS
CHRIST;" that is, to his glory. Now for our

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clear underſtanding of the ſenſe of this phraſe of glorifying GOD, or doing thing's to GOD's glory; we will conſider the various uſe of it in ſcripture, and ſo deſcend to the proper and particular ſenſe of it here in the text.

"The Glory of GOD" is nothing elſe but the honour which is given to him by his creatures; and conſequently the general notion of glorifying GOD, or doing any thing to his glory, is to deſign to honour GOD by ſuch and ſuch actions: and this phraſe is in ſcripture more eſpecially applied to theſe following particulars.

I. We are ſaid in ſcripture to glorify GOD by a ſolemn acknowledgment of him and his perfections; of his goodneſs and mercy, of his power and wiſdom, of his truth and faithfulneſs, of his ſovereign dominion and authority over us. Hence it is that all ſolemn actions of religion are called the worſhip of GOD, which ſignifies that honour and glory which is given to him by his creatures, ſignified by ſome outward expreſſion of reverence and reſpect. Thus we are ſaid to worſhip GOD, when we fall down before him, and pray to him for mercy and bleſſings, or praiſe him for favours and benefits received from him, or perform any other ſolemn act of religion. Pſal. lxxxvi. 9. "All nations "whom thou haſt made, ſhall come and worſhip be"fore thee, O LORD, and ſhall glorify thy name."

But eſpecially the duty of praiſe and thankſgiving is moſt frequently in ſcripture called glorifying of GOD, or giving glory to him. Pſal. lxxxvi. 14. "I will "praiſe thee, O LORD my GOD, with all my heart, "and will glorify thy name." Matth. v. 16. "Let "your light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee "your good works, and glorify your Father which is "in heaven;" that is, praiſe him upon that account. Luke v. 25. it is ſaid of the man ſick of the palſy, that when he was healed, "he departed to his own houſe, "glorify-

"glorifying GOD; that is, praiſing GOD for his great mercy to him. And Luke xvii. 18. our SAVIOUR ſpeaking of the ten lepers that were healed, ſays that "but one of them returned to give glory to GOD;" that is, to return thanks to GOD for his recovery.

II. Men are ſaid in ſcripture to give glory to GOD by the acknowledgment of their ſins, and repentance of them. Joſhua vii. 19. "And Joſhua ſaid to A-"chan, My ſon, give glory to the LORD GOD of If-"rael, and make confeſſion to him." In like manner the prophet Jeremiah, exhorting the people to repentance, uſeth this expreſſion, Jer. xiii. 16. "Give "glory to the LORD your GOD, before he cauſe "darkneſs, and before your feet ſtumble upon the "dark mountains." And Rev. xvi. 9. it is ſaid, that thoſe upon whom great plagues fell, "repented "not to give GOD glory." We glorify GOD by confeſſion of our ſins and repentance, becauſe in ſo doing we acknowledge his authority, and the holineſs of thoſe righteous laws which we have broken.

III. We are ſaid likewiſe in ſcripture to glorify GOD by our holineſs and obedience. Thus we are commanded to glorify GOD by the chaſtity of our bodies, and the purity of our minds, 1 Cor. vi. 20. "Glorify GOD in your body, and in your ſpirit, "which are his." Thus our SAVIOUR is ſaid to have glorified GOD in the world, by his perfect obedience to his will, John xvii. 4. "Father, I have "glorified thee upon earth." And thus he tells us, we may glorify GOD by the fruits of holineſs and obedience in our lives, John xv. 8. "Herein is my "Father glorified, if ye bring forth much fruit." So likewiſe St. Paul prays for the Philippians, that they may be "filled with the fruits of righteouſneſs, "which are by JESUS CHRIST unto the glory and "praiſe of GOD."

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IV. We are ſaid likewiſe in an eſpecial manner to glorify GOD by our ſufferings for his cauſe and truth. John xxi. 19. our SAVIOUR, foretelling St. Peter's martyrdom, expreſſeth it by this phraſe of glorifying GOD by his death: "this ſpake he, ſignifying by "what death he ſhould glorify God."

V. and laſtly, And becauſe religion is the ſolemn honour, and public owning and acknowledgment of the Deity. Hence it is that in ſcripture we are ſaid to glorify GOD in a peculiar and eminent manner, when in all our actions we conſult the honour and advantage of religion. Upon this account St. Peter exhorts the miniſters of the goſpel, ſo to preach to the people, and ſo to perform the public offices of religion, as may be for the honour of religion; and this he calls glorifying of GOD, 1 Pet. iv. 11. "If any man ſpeak, "let him ſpeak as the oracles of GOD; if any man "miniſter, let him do it as of the ability which GOD "giveth, that GOD in all things may be glorified." And becauſe the peace and unity of Chriſtians is ſo very much for the honour and advantage of religion, therefore we are ſaid in an eſpecial manner to glorify GOD, by maintaining the peace and unity of the church, Rom. xv. 5, 6. "Now the GOD of patience "and conſolation grant you to be like minded one "toward another, that ye may with one mind and "one mouth glorify GOD, even the Father of our "LORD JESUS CHRIST." And here in the text, we are ſaid to do all things "to the glory of GOD," when in all our actions we have a regard to the promoting and advancing of religion, and the edification of Chriſtians. For here by eating and drinking "to "the glory of GOD, the apoſtle plainly means, that when things offered to idols are ſet before us, we ſhould refrain from them, when by our eating, the

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intereſt of religion and the edification of Chriſtians may receive any prejudice; that is, when our eating may be a ſcandal to others, that is, "a ſtumbling block," or "an occaſion of falling into ſin." And that this is the apoſtle's meaning, is evident from ver. 23. "All "things are lawful for me, but all things are not expe- "dient, ὐ πάντα συμφέρει, all things profit not; all "things are lawful for me, but all things edify not;" that is, though I know it is a thing very lawful in itſelf, to eat things which have been offered to idols, if they be bought in the market, or accidentally ſet before me at a feaſt; yet in ſome circumſtances it may not be for the advantage of religion, and be ſo far from edifying, that it may be "an occaſion of ſin" to them. For inſtance; I am invited to a feaſt, where things offered to idols are ſet before me, and one ſays, "This "was offered in ſacrifice unto idols;" a ſufficient intimation to me, that he thinks it unlawful; and therefore I will forbear, becauſe of the inconvenience to religion, and the manifold ſcandal that might follow upon it, by hindring others from embracing religion, or by tempting weak Chriſtians, either to the doing of a thing againſt their conſcience, or to apoſtatize from religion. In this caſe, he that abſtains from theſe meats, and contents himſelf with others, "eats to the glory of GOD."

And that this is the true notion of ſcandal and offence, not barely to grieve others, or do things diſpleaſing to them, but to do ſuch things as are really hurtful to others, and may be a prejudice or hindrance to their ſalvation, and an occaſion of their falling into ſin: I ſay, that this is the true and proper notion of ſcandal, is evident from what follows immediately after the text; "give none offence to the Jews, nor to the "Gentiles, nor to the church of GOD: as I pleaſe all "men in all things; not ſeeking mine own profit, but

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"the profit of many, that they may be ſaved. Give "no offence to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the "church of GOD;" the apoſtle intimates, that ſuch an action as this we are ſpeaking of might be "an occaſion "of ſin to all theſe, and a hindrance of their ſalvation." It might hinder the Jew from turning chriſtian, and harden him in his infidelity; for he might ſay, ſee how well you Chriſtians worſhip one God, when you can partake of things offered to idols: it might confirm the heathen in his ſuperſtition, and keep him from embracing chriſtianity; for he might ſay ſurely, why ſhould the chriſtians perſuade me to forſake the worſhip of idols, when they themſelves will knowingly eat things offered to them? It might tempt the weak Chriſtians either to ſin againſt their conſciences, by following my example, or to apoſtatize from chriſtianity upon this offence taken againſt it; therefore, ſays the apoſtle, "do all things to the glory of GOD;" that is, for the honour and advantage of the chriſtian religion, and the furtherance of men's ſalvation: for ſo, ſays he, I do in theſe and all other actions of my life; I ſtudy the advantage of all men in all things, not regarding mine own convenience, in compariſon of the eternal ſalvation of others.

And thus I have, as briefly and clearly as I could, explained this phraſe to you, of "doing things to "the glory of GOD."

The reſult of all is, that we glorify GOD by doing our duty; by all actions of worſhip and obedience to GOD, and by our repentance in caſe of ſin and diſobedience; by doing and by ſuffering the will of GOD; more eſpecially by uſing our chriſtian liberty, as to things lawful in themſelves, ſo as may make moſt for the honour and advantage of religion, for the unity and edification of the church, and the ſalvation of the ſouls

ſouls of men; which is the proper notion, here in the text, of "eating and drinking, and doing whatever "we do, to the glory of GOD." SERM. CCX.

From all this diſcourſe it will be evident, that three things muſt concur, that our actions may be ſaid to be done "to the glory of God."

1. Our actions muſt be materially good; we muſt do what GOD commands, and abſtain from doing what he hath forbidden. Sin is in it's nature a diſhonour to GOD, a contradiction to his nature, and a contempt of his authority and laws; ſo that we cannot glorify GOD by tranſgreſſing our duty.

2. Our actions muſt not only be good, but they muſt be done with regard to GOD, and out of conſcience of our duty to him, and in hopes of the reward which he hath promiſed, and not for any low, and mean, and temporal end. The beſt action in itſelf may be ſpoil'd, and all the virtue of it blaſted by being done for a wrong end. If we ſerve GOD to pleaſe men, and be charitable out of vain glory, "to be ſeen of men;" if we profeſs godlineſs for gain, and are religious only to ſerve our temporal intereſt, though the actions we do be never ſo good, yet all the virtue and reward of them is loſt, by the mean end and deſign which we aim at in the doing of them; becauſe all this while we have no love or regard for GOD and the authority of his laws: we make no conſcience of our duty to him, we are not moved by the rewards of another world, which may lawfully work upon us and prevail with us, but we are ſwayed by little temporal advantages, which if we could obtain as well by doing the contrary, we would as ſoon, nay, perhaps, much ſooner do it.

And this is ſo eſſentially neceſſary, that no action, though never ſo good, that is not done with regard to GOD, and upon ſome of the proper motives and con-

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ſiderations of religion, ſuch as are the authority of GOD, conſcience of our duty to him, love of him, faith in his promiſes, fear of his diſpleaſure; I ſay, no action that is not done upon all, or ſome of theſe motives, can be ſaid to be done "to the glory of GOD," And this is the meaning of that ſaying among the Jews, which I mentioned before, "that he who "obeys any command of GOD, but not in his name, "ſhall receive no reward." Moral actions receive their denomination of good or evil, as well from the end, as from the matter of them; and as the beſt end cannot ſanctify an action bad in itſelf; ſo a bad end and deſign is enough to ſpoil the beſt action we can do; and as it is great impiety to do a wicked thing, though for a religious end, ſo it is great hypocriſy, to be religious for mean and temporal ends.

3. That all our actions may be done "to the glory "of GOD," we muſt not only take care that they be lawful in themſelves, but that they be not ſpoiled and vitiated by any bad circumſtance; for circumſtances alter moral actions, and may render that which is lawful in itſelf, unlawful in ſome caſes: ſo that if we would "do all things to the glory of GOD," we muſt in ſome caſes refrain from doing that which is lawful in itſelf, As when ſuch an action that I am about to do, may through the prejudice or miſtake of men, probably redound to the diſhonour and diſadvantage of religion, by cauſing factions and diviſions, by hindring ſome from embracing the true religion; or making others apoſtatize from it, or by being any other way an occaſion to men of falling into ſin, or any impediment to their ſalvation; in theſe and the like caſes, we are bound to have that conſideration of religion, that regard to the peace and unity of the church, that tenderneſs and charity for the ſouls of men, as to deny

ourſelves the uſe of things otherwiſe lawful; SERM. CCX.
f we do not do it we offend againſt a great rule of piety and charity.

all only farther, at preſent, endeavour to give a reſolution to two queſtions, much debated upon on of this rule of the apoſtle, of "doing all ngs to the glory of GOD".

ſt, How far we are bound actually to intend and n the glory of God in every particular action of ves. To this I anſwer,

That it is morally impoſſible that a man ſhould ery particular action with actual and explicit ghts and intentions of glorifying GOD thereby, and fore there can be no obligation to any ſuch thing.

It is not neceſſary, no more than for a man that a journey, every ſtep of his way actually to think s journey's end, and the place whither he intends o; a conſtant reſolution to go to ſuch a place, n due care not to go out of the way; and in caſe y doubt, to inform ourſelves as well as we can e right way, and to keep in it, is as much con-ation of the end of a man's journey, as is need-o bring him thither, and more than this would oubleſome and to no purpoſe; the caſe is the very in the courſe of a man's life. From whence it ws in the

Place, That an habitual and ſettled intention of l, to glorify GOD in the courſe of our lives is cient, becauſe this will ſerve all good purpoſes, ell as an actual intention upon every particu-occaſion. He that doth things with regard to , and out of conſcience of his duty to him, and n the proper motives and conſiderations of religi-n obedience and love to GOD, in hopes of his re-l, and out of fear of his diſpleaſure, glorifies GOD

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in his actions. And if this principle be but rooted and ſettled in his mind, it is ſufficient to govern his life, and is virtually, and to all purpoſes as true and conſtant an intention of glorifying GOD, as if we did actually and explicitly propound this end to ourſelves in every particular action of our lives.

Secondly, Whether a man be bound to prefer the glory of GOD before his own eternal happineſs as Moſes and St. Paul ſeem to have done; the one in being content to have "his name blotted out of the book "of life, the other to be "anathema from CHRIST, "for the ſalvation of Iſrael?" To this I anſwer.

If we could admit the ſuppoſition, that the glory of GOD and a man's eternal happineſs might come in competition, there could be no obligation upon a man to chuſe eternal miſery upon any conſideration whatſoever. The preference of one thing before another, ſuppoſeth them both to be objects of our choice; but the greateſt evil known and apprehended to be ſo, cannot be the object of a reaſonable Choice; neither the greateſt moral nor natural evil of ſin, or miſery. Sin is not to be choſen in any caſe, no not for the glory of GOD. The apoſtle makes the ſuppoſition and anſwers it; that "if the truth and glory of GOD "could be promoted by his lie, yet we are not to do "evil that good may come," Rom. iii. 7, 8.

Nor is the greateſt natural evil the object of our choice. GOD himſelf hath planted a principle in our nature to the contrary, to ſeek our own happineſs, and to avoid utter ruin and deſtruction; and then ſurely much more that which is much worſe, as eternal miſery is, whatever ſome learned men, in deſpite of nature and common ſenſe, have aſſerted to the contrary, that it is better and more deſirable to be extremely and eternally miſerable, than not to be; for what

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hat is there desirable in being, when it serves to no ther purpose but to be the foundation of endless and ntolerable misery. And if this be a principle of our nature, can any man imagine that GOD should frame us o, as to make the first and fundamental principle of t directly opposite to our duty?

As to the instance of Moses, it does not reach this ase; because the phrase of "blotting out of the book of life," does in all probability signify no more than a temporal death. As to that of St. Paul, is by no means to be taken in a strict sense, but as vehement and hyperbolical expression of his mighty ffection to his "brethren according to the flesh, for whom, says he, I could wish to be an anathema from CHRIST." Besides the reason of the thing, he form of the expression shews the meaning of it, I ould wish, that is, I would be content to do or suffer almost any thing for their salvation, insomuch hat I could wish, if it were fit and lawful, and reaonable to make such a wish, to be accursed from CHRIST for their sakes. It is plainly a suspended form f speech, which declares nothing absolutely. But,

2. It is a vain and senseless supposition, that the lory of GOD and our eternal happiness can stand in ompetition. By seeking the glory of GOD, we naurally and directly promote our own happiness; the lory of GOD and our happiness, are inseparably linkd together; we cannot glorify GOD by sin, and so racious hath GOD been to us, that he hath made hose things to be our duty, which naturally tend to ur felicity; and we cannot glorify GOD more than y doing our duty, nor can we promote our happiness more effectually than by the same way. From whence it plainly follows that the glory of GOD and ur happiness, cannot reasonably be supposed to cross

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and contradict one another; and therefore the queſtion is frivolous which ſuppoſeth they may come in competition. 1 Cor. xv. 58. the apoſtle exhorts Chriſtians to be "ſtedfaſt and unmoveable, and abundant in the work of the LORD, knowing that "their labour ſhall not be in vain in the LORD." And Tit. i. 1, 2. the apoſtle calls himſelf, "a ſervant of JESUS CHRIST, in hope of eternal life, "which GOD that cannot lie hath promiſed." To ſerve GOD in hope of eternal life, is to glorify GOD, and therefore the glory of GOD and our eternal happineſs are never to be oppoſed.

I ſhall briefly draw two or three inferences from this diſcourſe, and ſo conclude.

I. See here the great goodneſs of GOD to mankind, who is pleaſed to eſteem whatever is for the good of men to be for the glory of GOD; and whatever tends to the eternal ſalvation of our ſelves, or others, to be a glorifying of himſelf.

II. We learn hence likewiſe, the excellency of the chriſtian religion, which requires not only a conſcientious care of ourſelves, to do nothing but what is lawful; but likewiſe a charitable regard to others in the uſe of our liberty, in the doing or not doing of thoſe things which we may lawfully do; after the ſecuring of our own happineſs by doing our duty, we are to conſult the edification and ſalvation of others, in the charitable uſe of our liberty in thoſe things which GOD hath left indifferent.

III. Here is a great argument to us to be very careful of our duty, and to abound in the fruits of holineſs, becauſe hereby we glorify GOD. "Herein "is my Father glorified," ſays our SAVIOUR, "if ye "bring forth much fruit;" and the apoſtle tells us, that "the fruits of righteouſneſs are to the praiſe and "glory

ory of GOD." We having all from GOD, our being, our ſouls and bodies, and the powers faculties of both, and therefore we ſhould give the glory of his own gifts; our ſouls and bodies not only made by him at firſt, but are likewiſe med by him, and "bought with a price," and fore, as the apoſtle argues, "we ſhould glorify n in our bodies, and in our ſouls, which are his." r. and laſtly, we ſhould in all our actions have rticular regard to the honour and advantage of ion, the edification of our brethren, and the peace unity of the church, becauſe in theſe things we n a peculiar manner glorify GOD. In vain do pretend to ſeek the glory of GOD by faction and ion, which do in their own nature ſo immedi- tend to the diſhonour and damage of religion. t to the wicked lives of men, nothing is ſo great ſparagement and weakning to religion, as the ſions of Chriſtians; and therefore inſtead of em- ing our zeal about differences, we ſhould be ous for peace and unity, "that with one mind, nd one mouth, we may glorify GOD, even the 'ather of our LORD JESUS CHRIST".

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ing good, a ſecurity againſt injuries from men.

1 PET. iii. 13.

who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of of that which is good?

THE apoſtle in this and the former chapter, earneſtly preſſeth Chriſtians to an holy and unblameable

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blameable converſation, that the heathen might have no occaſion, from the ill lives of Chriſtians, to reproach chriſtianity; particularly he cautions them againſt that abuſe of chriſtian liberty, which, it ſeems, too many were guilty of, caſting off obedience to their ſuperiors under that pretence; telling them, that nothing could be a greater ſcandal to their religion, nor raiſe a more juſt prejudice in the minds of men againſt it: and therefore he ſtrictly chargeth them with the duty of obedience in their ſeveral relations; as of ſubjects to their governors, of ſervants to their maſters, of wives to their huſbands; and in ſhort, to practiſe all thoſe virtues, both among themſelves and towards others, which are apt to reconcile and gain the affections of men to them; to be charitable and compaſſionate, courteous and peaceable one towards another, and towards all men; not only to abſtain from injury and provocation, but from revenge by word or deed; and inſtead thereof, to bleſs and do good, and by all poſſible means to preſerve and purſue peace. Ver. 8. 9. "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having "compaſſion one of another; love as brethren, be pi- "tiful, be courteous, not rendring evil for evil, or "railing for railing, but contrariwiſe bleſſing; know- "ing that ye are thereunto called, that ye ſhould in- "herit a bleſſing."

And to encourage them to the practice of theſe virtues, he tells them, that they could by no other means more effectually conſult the ſafety and comfort of their lives, ver. 10. "For he that will love life, and ſee good "days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his "lips that they ſpeak no guile; let him eſchew evil, "and do good; let him ſeek peace and enſue it."

And this was the way to gain the favour of God, and to engage his providence for our protection, ver.

12.

. " For the eyes of the LORD are over the righte- SERM.
ous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but CCXI.
the face of the LORD is againſt them that do evil."
And that this would alſo be the beſt way to recon-
e men to us, and to gain their good-will, and to
vent injuries and affronts from them, ver. 13.
And who is he that will harm you?" &c.
In theſe words we have, firſt, a qualification ſup-
ſed, " If ye be followers of that which is good."
Secondly, the benefit and advantage we may rea-
nably expect from it, viz. ſecurity from the ill uſage
d injuries of men. " Who is he that will harm you?"
Firſt, the qualification ſuppoſed is, that we be "fol-
lowers of that which is good." But what is that?
ne apoſtle takes it for granted, that every body
ows it, and he had given inſtances of it before. He
es not go about to define or explain it, but appeals
every man's mind and conſcience, to tell him what
is. It is not any thing that is diſputed and contro-
rted, which ſome men call good, and others evil;
t that which all are agreed in, and which is univer-
ly approved and commended by heathens as well
Chriſtians; that which is ſubſtantially good, and
at which is unqueſtionably ſo. It is not zeal for
ſer things, about the ritual and ceremonial part of
igion, and a great ſtrictneſs about the external parts
it, and much nicety and ſcrupulouſneſs about things
no moment, as the Phariſees " tything of mint,"
:. about meats and drinks," and " the obſerva-
tion of days," and the like; but a purſuit of " the
weightier things of the law," a care of the great
ties of religion, " mercy, and juſtice, and fidelity,"
oſe things " wherein the kingdom of GOD conſiſts,
righteouſneſs and peace." Such as theſe the apo-
: had inſtanced in, as ſubſtantial and unqueſtionable

parts

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parts of goodneſs, things which admit of no diſpute, but do approve themſelves to the reaſon and conſcience of all mankind; and the practice of theſe he calls "following of that which is good *."

"Be ye followers of that which is good:" the word is μιμηταὶ, "If ye imitate the good you ſee in others;" in one copy the word is ζηλωταὶ, "If ye be zealous "of that which is good." And this is not amiſs. Zeal about leſſer and diſputable things is very unſuitable and miſbecoming: but we cannot be to earneſt and zealous in the purſuit of things which are ſubſtantially and unqueſtionably good; it is good, and will become us to be zealouſly affected about ſuch things. Some things will not bear much zeal, and the more earneſt we are about them, the leſs we recommend ourſelves to the approbation of ſober and conſiderate men. Great zeal about little and doubtful things, is an argument of a weak mind, infatuated by ſuperſtition, or over-heated by enthuſiaſm: but nothing more becomes a wiſe man, than the ſerious and earneſt purſuit of thoſe things which are agreed on all hands to be good, and have an univerſal approbation among all parties and profeſſions of men, how wide ſoever their differences may be in other matters. This for the qualification ſuppoſed, "If ye be followers "of that which is good." I proceed to the

Second thing in the text, the benefit and advantage which may be reaſonably expected from it, and that is, ſecurity from the ill uſage and injuries of men. "Who is he that will harm you?" &c. The apoſtle doth not abſolutely ſay, none will do it; but he ſpeaks of it as a thing ſo very unreaſonable, and upon all accounts ſo unlikely and improbable, that we may reaſonably preſume, that it will not ordinarily and often

* See more of this, vol. VI. ſerm. CII. p. 314.

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en happen. Not but that good men are liable to be affronted and perſecuted, and no man's virtues, how bright and unblemiſhed ſoever, will at all times, and in all caſes, exempt him from all manner of injury and ill treatment: but the "following of that which is "good" (as I have explain'd it) doth in it's own nature tend to ſecure us from the malice and miſchief of men, and very frequently does it, and, all things conſider'd, is a much more effectual means to this end, than any other courſe we can take; and this the apoſtle means when he ſays, "Who is he that will harm you?" &c.

And this will appear, whether we conſider the nature of virtue and goodneſs; or the nature of man, even when it is very much depraved and corrupted; or the providence of GOD.

I. If we conſider the nature of virtue and goodneſs, which is apt to gain upon the affections of men, and ſecretly to win their love and eſteem. True goodneſs is inwardly eſteemed by bad men, and many times had in very great eſteem and admiration, even by thoſe who are very far from the practice of it; it carries an awe and majeſty with it; ſo that bad men are very often with-held and reſtrained from harming the good, by that ſecret and inward reverence which they bear to goodneſs.

There are ſeveral virtues, which are apt in their own nature to prevent injuries and affronts from others. Humility takes away all occaſion of inſolence from the proud and haughty; it baffles pride, and puts it out of countenance. Meekneſs pacifies wrath, and blunts the edge of injury and violence. Suffering evil for good is apt to allay and extinguiſh enmity, to ſubdue the rougheſt diſpoſitions, and to conquer even malice itſelf. And there are other virtues, which are apt in their own nature to oblige men, and gain their good-

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will, and make them our friends, and to tie their affections ſtrongly to us; as courteſy and charity, kindneſs and compaſſion, and a readineſs to do all good offices to all men: and the friendſhip and good-will of others is a powerful defence againſt injuries. Every man will cry ſhame of thoſe who ſhall fall foul upon him that hurts no body. He that obligeth many, ſhall have many to take his part when he is aſſaulted, to riſe up in his defence and reſcue, and to interpoſe between him and danger. "For a good man," ſays the apoſtle, "ſome would even dare to die."

Beſides, it is very conſiderable, that none of theſe virtues expoſe men to any danger and trouble from human laws. When chriſtianity was perſecuted, becauſe it differ'd from, and oppoſed the received religion and ſuperſtition of the world, it was commonly acknowledged by the heathen (as Tertullian tells us) that the Chriſtians were very good men in all other things, ſaving that they were Chriſtians. When the laws were moſt ſevere againſt Chriſtians for their meetings, which they called ſeditious, and for their refuſal to comply with the received ſuperſtition of the world, which they called contempt of the gods; yet there were all this while no laws made againſt modeſty, and humility, and meekneſs, and kindneſs, and charity, and peaceableneſs, and forgiveneſs of injuries. Theſe virtues are in their nature of ſo unalterable goodneſs, that they could not poſſibly be made matter of accuſation; no government ever had the face to make laws againſt them. And this the apoſtle takes notice of as a ſingular commendation and great teſtimony to the immutable goodneſs of theſe things, that in the experience of all ages and nations, there was never any ſuch inconvenience found in any of them, as to give occaſion to a law againſt them, Gal. v. 22, 23. "But

"the

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" the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-ſuf-
" fering, gentleneſs, fidelity, meekneſs, temperance.
" Againſt ſuch things there is no law." So that goodneſs from its own nature hath this ſecurity, that it brings men under the danger of no law.

II. If we conſider the nature of man, even where it is very much depraved and corrupted. There is ſomething that is apt to reſtrain bad men from injuring thoſe that are remarkably good; a reverence for goodneſs, and the inward convictions of their own mind, that thoſe whom they are going about to injure, are better and more righteous than themſelves; the fear of GOD, and of bringing down his vengeance upon their heads, by their ill treatment of his friends and followers; and many times the fear of men, who though they be not good themſelves, yet have an eſteem for thoſe that are ſo, and cannot endure to ſee them wronged and oppreſſed, eſpecially if they have been obliged by them, and have found the real effects of their goodneſs in good offices done by them to themſelves.

Beſides that bad men are ſeldom bad for nought, without any cauſe given, without any manner of temptation and provocation to be ſo. Who will hurt a harmleſs man, and injure the innocent? For what cauſe, or for what end ſhould he do it? He muſt love miſchief for itſelf, that will do it to thoſe who never offered him any occaſion and provocation.

III. If we conſider the providence of GOD, which is particularly concerned for the protection of innocency and goodneſs. " For the righteous LORD lov-
" eth righteouſneſs, and his countenance will behold
" the upright." This the apoſtle takes notice of, in the verſe before the text, as the great ſecurity of good men againſt violence and injury; " The eyes of the
" LORD are over the righteous, and his ears are open

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" to their prayer." So that if bad men were never ſo ill diſpoſed toward the good, and bent to do them all the injury and miſchief they could deviſe, the providence of GOD hath a thouſand ways to prevent it; and if he pleaſes to interpoſe between them and danger, who can harm them, if they would? He can " ſnare the wicked in the works of their own hands, " and make the miſchief which they deviſed" againſt good men, " to return upon their own heads;" he can weaken their hands, and infatuate their counſels, ſo that they ſhall not be able to bring their wicked enterpriſes to paſs; he can change their hearts, and turn the fierceneſs and rage of men againſt us into a fit of love and kindneſs, as he did the heart of Eſau towards his brother Jacob; and their bittereſt enmity againſt truth and goodneſs, into a mighty zeal for it, as he did in St. Paul, who when he came to Damaſcus, fell a preaching up that way, which he came thither on purpoſe to perſecute. And this GOD hath promiſed to do for good men, who are careful to pleaſe him. " When a man's ways pleaſe the LORD, he " will make his enemies to be at peace with him."

So that conſidering the nature of goodneſs, and the nature of man, and the providence of GOD, " Who " is like to harm us, if we be followers of that which " is good?" None can reaſonably do it; and he muſt be a very bad man that can find in his heart to do it, when there is no cauſe, no temptation or provocation to it; and the providence of GOD, " who hath the " hearts of men in his hands, and can ſway and in- " cline them as he pleaſeth," is particularly concerned to preſerve good men from harm and miſchief.

And yet we are not to underſtand this ſaying of the apoſtle, as declaring to us the conſtant and certain event of things, without any exception to the contrary.

trary. For good men to appearance, nay thoſe that are really ſo, and the very beſt of men, are ſometimes expoſed to great injuries and ſufferings; of which I ſhall give you an account in theſe following particulars.

I. Some that ſeem to be good, are not ſincerely ſo; and when they, by the juſt judgment of GOD, are puniſhed for their hypocriſy, in the opinion of many goodneſs ſeems to ſuffer. Some, under a great profeſſion and colour of religion, have done very bad things, and when they juſtly ſuffer for great crimes, they call puniſhment perſecution, and the party and church which they are of, call them ſaints and martyrs.

II. Some that are really good, are very imperfectly ſo, have many flaws and defects, which do very much blemiſh and obſcure their goodneſs; they are "followers of that which is good," but they have an equal zeal for things which have no goodneſs in them, or ſo little that it is not worth all that ſtir and buſtle which they make about them; and will contend as earneſtly for a doubtful, and it may be for a falſe opinion, as for the articles of the creed, and for "the faith "which was once delivered to the ſaints;" and will oppoſe a little ceremony with as much heat, as the greateſt immorality. In theſe caſes, it is not mens goodneſs which raiſeth enmity againſt them, but their imprudent zeal and other infirmities which attend it: but however, bad men are glad to lay hold of thoſe occaſions and pretences of enmity, which their indiſcretion offers. Good men may be, and frequently are miſtaken in their opinions and apprehenſions of things; but it is a great miſtake to have an equal zeal for little and doubtful things, as for the great and indiſpenſable duties of the chriſtian life, and yet many times ſo as to neglect thoſe to a great degree; and men muſt blame themſelves for the inconveniences that happen to them

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for their own indiſcretion; for neither will the nature of the thing bear them out alike, nor will the providence of God be equally concerned to protect men in the following of that, which they through groſs miſtake, and a heady conceit of their own knowledge in religion, think to be good, as in the following of that which is really and unqueſtionably good.

III. The enmity of ſome men againſt goodneſs is ſo violent and implacable, that no innocency, no excellency of goodneſs, how great ſoever, can reſtrain their malice towards good men, or hinder the effects of it, when it comes in their way, and they have power to do them miſchief. Againſt theſe the providence of God is our beſt ſafe-guard; and it is wiſdom, as much as poſſible, to keep out of their way, and to pray with St. Paul, that we may be "deli-"vered from wicked and unreaſonable men;" men of ſo abſurd a malice againſt goodneſs that it is not to be prevented by any innocency or prudence; and ſo implacable, that there is no way to gain and reconcile them, nor perhaps is it much deſirable; their good word would be no credit to us, and their friendſhip would be pernicious, when it cannot be had upon other terms, than of conniving at their faults, and being concerned in their quarrels, and at laſt quarrelling and breaking with them, unleſs we will "run "with them to the ſame exceſs of riot." The friendſhip of ſuch men is more terrible than their enmity, and their malice much leſs to be dreaded than their kindneſs.

IV. The laſt and chief exception is that of the croſs, when the ſufferings and perſecutions of good men are neceſſary for the great ends of God's glory, for the advancement of religion, and the example and ſalvation of others. And with this exception all the declarations

declarations of ſcripture concerning the temporal proſ- SERM. CCXI.
perity and ſafety of good men, and all the promiſes of the new teſtament are to be underſtood. And this exception our SAVIOUR himſelf expreſly makes, Mark x. 29, 30. "Verily I ſay unto you, there is no man "that hath left houſe, or brethren, or ſiſters, or fa- "ther, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, "for my ſake and the goſpel's, but he ſhall receive "an hundred-fold now in this time, houſes, and bre- "thren, and ſiſters, and mothers, and children, and "lands, with perſecution;' and in the world to come "eternal life;" that is, ſo far as a ſtate of perſecution would admit, all theſe loſſes ſhould be recompenſed to them in this preſent time; as they were to the apoſtles in a remarkable manner, when they who had but little to part with for the goſpel, had the eſtates of Chriſtians laid at their feet and committed to their diſpoſal, for the nobleſt purpoſes of charity, and common ſupport of Chriſtians, which was as much to them as if they had been maſters of the greateſt eſtates; and whatever was wanting to any of them in the accompliſhment of this promiſe, was abundantly made up to them in the unſpeakable and eternal happineſs of the world to come. And this exception the apoſtle St. Peter is careful to mention expreſly, immediately after the text; for after he had ſaid, "who is he that will harm you, if ye be follow- "ers of that which is good?" he immediately adds, "But, and if ye ſuffer for righteouſneſs ſake, happy "are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be "troubled, but ſanctify the LORD GOD in your "hearts;" that is, in this caſe, fear GOD more than men, "and be ready always to give an anſwer to every "man, that aſketh you a reaſon of the hope that "is in you;" that is, if ye be queſtioned for be-

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ing Chriſtians, be ready to own your profeſſion, and to give a reaſon of it: ſo that the apoſtle ſuppoſeth, that notwithſtanding what he had ſaid, that ordinarily it is not in the nature of men to perſecute men for true goodneſs, yet they muſt not expect to be exempted from perſecution, which was neceſſary for the eſtabliſhment of the chriſtian religion.

In theſe caſes GOD permits the devil to inſtigate and exaſperate evil men againſt thoſe that are good, to act beyond their uſual temper. Thus GOD, when he deſigned an illuſtrious example of patience for all ages of the world, he lets looſe the devil, not only to ſtir up his inſtruments the Chaldeans and Sabeans againſt Job, but to afflict him immediately himſelf with bodily pains and diſeaſes. In theſe and the like caſes, the beſt men are expoſed to the greateſt ſufferings. Thus GOD permitted Socrates, that great light among the Gentiles, and the glory of philoſophy, to be cruelly treated and put to death, for an example of virtue, and a teſtimony againſt their impious and abominable idolatry. And thus likewiſe when it was neceſſary for the common ſalvation of men, and to give the world an example beyond all exception of the greateſt innocency, enduring the greateſt indignities and ſufferings with the greateſt patience that one ſhould ſuffer for all mankind, he permitted the beſt man that ever was, GOD and goodneſs incarnate, "by "wicked hands to be crucified and ſlain;" and afterwards when it was neceſſary for the propagation and eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity in the world, that the truth of it ſhould be ſealed by the death of ſo many martyrs, GOD was pleaſed to ſuffer the rage of ban men to break out into all manner of violence and cruelty.

But yet notwithſtanding theſe exceptions, thoſe who

ho make it their buſineſs to do good, and to excel SERM. CCXI.
n thoſe virtues which are apt to win and oblige man-
ind, may in ordinary caſes and times expect great
afety and protection againſt the injuries of the world,
rom an exemplary piety, and innocency, and good-
eſs; for theſe ſayings in the new teſtament, that
' through many tribulations we muſt enter into the
' kingdom of GOD;" and " that whoever will live
' godly in CHRIST JESUS, muſt ſuffer perſecution,"
re not equally to be extended to all places and times;
ut more peculiarly to be underſtood of the firſt times
f chriſtianity, when the providence of GOD thought fit
o eſtabliſh the chriſtian religion, upon the innocent
ives and patient ſufferings of the firſt profeſſors of it.

The reſult from all this diſcourſe is, that we ſhould
ot be weary of well-doing, but mind and follow the
hings which are ſubſtantially and unqueſtionably
ood; not doubting, but beſides the infinite reward
f it in the other world, it will ordinarily turn to our
reat ſecurity and advantage in this life, and ſave us
armleſs from a great many miſchiefs and inconve-
iencies which others are expoſed to. If we endea-
our to excel in thoſe chriſtian virtues which the apoſ-
le mentions before the text, and which he means by
our being " followers of that which is good," we
ſhall undoubtedly find the comfort of it, in thoſe tem-
poral benefits that will redound to us: for the ſcrip-
ture hath not ſaid in vain, " truſt in the LORD and
" do good, ſo ſhalt thou dwell in the land, and
" verily thou ſhalt be fed: bleſſed are the meek, for
" they ſhall inherit the earth: glory, and honour,
" and peace, to every man that worketh good:"
that " the fruit of righteouſneſs is ſown in peace of
" them that work peace:" that " by well-doing
" we ſhall put to ſilence the ignorance of fooliſh
men:"

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" men:" that " the kingdom of GOD is not meat " and drink, but righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy " in the Holy Ghoſt; and that he that in theſe things " ſerveth CHRIST, is accepted of GOD, and approv- " ed of men."

But if we miſtake religion, and place it in thoſe things wherein it doth not really conſiſt, in airy notions, and doubtful opinions, in ſuperſtitious conceits and practices, and in a fiery and furious zeal for things of no weight and ſubſtance, of no real virtue and goodneſs; if we be defective in the great virtues of meekneſs and humility, of peaceableneſs and charity, of kindneſs and courteſy, of forbearance and forgiveneſs, of " rendering good for evil," and " over- " coming evil with good," qualities which will univerſally endear us and recommend us to the favour and protection of GOD, and to the eſteem and good will of men; and if inſtead of theſe we abound in malice and envy, be proud and conceited, cenſorious and uncharitable, contentious and unpeaceable, rude and uncivil, impatient and implacable; we muſt not think it ſtrange, if we be ill treated in this world, not for our goodneſs, but for our want of it; and we have no reaſon to wonder, if at every turn we meet with the inconveniencies of our own heat and indiſcretion, of our peeviſh and moroſe temper, of our factious and turbulent diſpoſition. For this is an eternal rule of truth, " as we ſow, ſo ſhall we reap;" every man ſhall be " filled with his own ways, and " eat the fruit of his own doings."

SERMON CCXII.

Of diligence in our general and particular calling.

ECCL. ix. 10.

Whatſoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wiſdom in the grave, whither thou goeſt.

SERM. CCXII. Preached at Whitehall, 1685.

THESE words of the royal preacher, are a general exhortation to diligence and induſtry, in that work which is moſt proper for us to do in this world. And I ſhall conſider in them theſe two things.

Firſt, The matter of this advice and exhortation, and that is, that we would uſe great diligence about thoſe things which are the proper work and employment of this life. "Whatſoever thy hand findeth to "do, do it with all thy might. Whatſoever thy hand "findeth to do;" that is, the work which is before thee, which is moſt proper for thee to propoſe to thy ſelf, as the great end and deſign of thy life, the province and charge which is appointed thee. So that theſe words, in the full compaſs and extent of them, may very well comprehend every reaſonable purpoſe and undertaking, whatever is incumbent upon us as a duty, and is matter of reaſonable choice. "Do it "with all thy might;" that is, ſet about it with great care, uſe all poſſible diligence and induſtry for the effecting and accompliſhing of it.

Secondly, here is the argument whereby the wiſe preacher doth enforce this counſel and exhortation; becauſe this life is the proper ſeaſon of activity and induſtry,

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duſtry, of deſigning and doing thoſe things which are in order to a future happineſs; and when this life is at an end, there will be no farther opportunity of working, there will nothing then remain, but to reap the fruit, and to receive the juſt recompence of what we have done in this life; "for there is no work, "nor device, nor knowledge, nor wiſdom in the "grave, whither thou goeſt." In the grave, this the LXX render by the word ἅδης, by which the Greeks uſed to expreſs the ſtate of the dead, the condition of ſeparate ſouls of good or bad men after they are departed this life, and entered into another world. In which ſtate, Solomon does not mean that departed ſouls have no knowledge and ſenſe of any thing, but that then there will be no place for any counſel and deſign, for any activity and induſtry in order to our happineſs: what we do to this purpoſe, we muſt do whilſt we are in this world, it will be too late afterwards to think of altering or bettering our condition.

Theſe are the two parts of the text, and they ſhall be the two heads of my following diſcourſe; and God grant that what ſhall be ſaid upon them, may be effectual to perſuade every one of us ſeriouſly to mind our great intereſt and concernment, and to apply ourſelves with all our might to that which is our proper work and buſineſs in this world.

Firſt, We will conſider the matter of this counſel and exhortation, and that is, that we would uſe great diligence and induſtry about that which is our proper work and buſineſs in this life; and this may very probably comprehend in it theſe two things.

I. Diligence in our great work and buſineſs, that which equally concerns every man, I mean the buſineſs of religion, in order to the eternal happineſs and ſalvation of our ſouls.

II. Dili-

II. Diligence in our particular calling and charge, whatever it be. SERM. CCXII.

I. Diligence in our great and general work, that which equally concerns every man, the buſineſs of religion, in order to the eternal happineſs and ſalvation of our ſouls; and this conſiſts in theſe two things.

1. In a ſincere care and endeavour of univerſal obedience to GOD, by the conformity of our lives and actions to his laws.

2. In caſe of ſin and miſcarriage, in a ſincere repentance for our ſins, and a timely care to be reconciled to GOD.

1. In a ſincere care and endeavour of univerſal obedience to GOD, by the conformity of our lives and actions to his will and law. And this is a great work, and requires our greateſt care and diligence, to rectify our minds, to reſtrain our evil inclinations, to ſubdue and mortify our luſts, to correct the irregularity of our paſſions, to moderate and govern our appetites and affections, and to keep them within due and reaſonable bounds; "to take heed to our ways, that "we offend not with our tongue," nor tranſgreſs our duty by word or deed; to ſerve GOD with true devotion of mind, both in public and private; to attend upon the duties of his worſhip, and to perform all acts of piety and religion, with care and conſtancy, in the ſincerity and uprightneſs of our hearts; to be meek and humble, peaceable and patient, chearful and contented with our condition; to be ready not only to forgive injuries, but to requite them with kindneſs and good turns, to do all offices of humanity and charity to all men, according to our ability and opportunity; to inſtruct the ignorant, and to reduce thoſe that are in error to the knowledge of the truth, by wiſe counſel and good example; to endeavour "to

"turn

SERM. CCXII. "turn men from the evil of their ways, and to ſave "their ſouls from death;" to be ready to ſupply men's outward wants and neceſſities, to comfort them in their ſorrows, and to relieve them in their affliction and diſtreſs.

And theſe works of compaſſion and charity are perhaps more particularly intended here in the text, for ſo the Ghaldee paraphraſe interprets theſe words of Solomon, as a precept of charity, rendering them thus, "Do all thou canſt, according to thy utmoſt ability "in alms and charity:" for nothing but this will turn to our account in another world; no other way of laying out our eſtates will be of any advantage to us in the future ſtate. And though I do not think Solomon did here intend to exclude any part of religious practice, yet he might very well have a more eſpecial eye and regard to this, as one of the principal inſtances and beſt evidences of a true and ſincere piety, according to that of St. James, chap. i. ver. laſt, "Pure religion and undefiled before GOD and the Fa"ther is this, to viſit the fatherleſs and widows "in their affliction." To be ſure, our SAVIOUR lays mighty weight upon it, by making it the great article upon which men ſhall be tried at the judgment of the great day. And indeed no religion is to be valued, that wants humanity and compaſſion; for ſo far as it departs from this, it departs from the true nature of GOD and religion.

So that it is a vaſt work which lies upon our hands, and which every one of us, from the higheſt to the loweſt are engaged in; this buſineſs of religion, this care of our whole man, and of our whole duty, of the inward frame and diſpoſition of our minds, and of all our words and actions, "to keep our hearts with all dili"gence," and carefully to obſerve and govern all the inclinations

inclinations and motions of our ſouls, and to "order our "whole converſation aright;" in a word, to do GOD all the ſervice, and men all the good that poſſibly we can, while we are in this world. This is the firſt.

2. And becauſe "in many things we offend all, "and there is no man that ſinneth not," another part of our work and care is, in caſe of tranſgreſſion and miſcarriage in any part of our duty, to exerciſe repentance for it, that ſo we may be reconciled to GOD, and at peace with him.

And this is abſolutely neceſſary, becauſe our life and happineſs depend upon it, and "except we repent, "we muſt periſh," and be miſerable for ever. It cannot be denied, but that this work of repentance is very harſh and unpleaſant, like the taking of phyſic and ſearching into a wound; but becauſe it tends to our health and ſafety, and is the neceſſary way and means to a better condition, this ſeverity muſt be ſubmitted to, if we deſire to be cured, and have a mind to be well; and the ſooner we make uſe of this remedy the better, we ſhall find ſo much the leſs difficulty and pain in the cure.

And there is great reaſon why we ſhould frequently exerciſe and renew our repentance, becauſe our failings are frequent, and in one kind or other we offend and provoke GOD every day; eſpecially when we are coming to the holy ſacrament, in which we ſolemnly renew our covenant with GOD, and promiſe him better obedience for the future; we ſhould examine our lives more ſtrictly, and call our ſins more particularly to remembrance, and exerciſe a moſt ſolemn and deep repentance for them; this is the way to keep our accounts in a good meaſure even. And this ſurely is great wiſdom, to provide that we may have no long account to make up, no great ſcores to wipe off, when

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we come to be overtaken by ſickneſs, and to lie upon our death-bed; that "innumerable tranſgreſſions" unrepented of may not then "compaſs us about," and ſtare us in the face, and fill our ſouls with fear and confuſion, with horror and amazement in a dying hour; that an unſupportable load of guilt may not then lie upon our minds, and oppreſs our conſciences, when we are leaſt able to bear it, and moſt unfit to deal with it, when we may not have time to call our ſins particularly to remembrance, and to exerciſe a particular repentance for them, and yet perhaps a general repentance may not be ſufficient, and available with GOD for the pardon and forgiveneſs of them.

Therefore we ſhould exerciſe ourſelves much in this work of repentance in the days of our health, when we are fitteſt for it, and when it will be moſt acceptable to GOD, and when the ſincerity of it will be moſt evident and comfortable to us, when we may know it to be true by the real and certain effects of of it, in the change and amendment of our lives. Whereas a death-bed repentance is infinitely hazardous, becauſe we may not perhaps have time and opportunity for the exerciſe of it; or if we ſhould have that, yet hardly can we have opportunity for the trial of it, whether it be ſincere or not, and conſequently muſt needs die very uncomfortably, and in great doubt and anxiety of mind, what will be our fate and doom in another world.

So that it is a great work which lies upon our hands, and equally concerns every one of us. The buſineſs of religion, which conſiſts in the ſtrict care of our duty to GOD and man, and in the frequent exerciſe of repentance for the ſins and miſcarriages of our lives; and we may conſequently judge, how great a care and diligence a work of ſo much difficulty and of ſo great moment and importance, does require and call for at our hands.

But beſides this we muſt, in the II. Place

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II. Place likewiſe be diligent in our particular calling and charge, in that province and ſtation which God hath appointed us, whatever it be; whether it conſiſts in the labour of our hands, or in the improvement of our minds, in order to the gaining of knowledge for our own pleaſure and ſatisfaction, and for the uſe and benefit of others: whether it lie in the ſkill of government, and the adminiſtration of public juſtice; or in the management of a great eſtate, of an honourable rank and quality above others, to the beſt advantage for the honour of God, and the benefit and advantage of men, ſo as by the influence of our power and eſtate, and by the authority of our example, to contribute all we can to the welfare and happineſs of others.

For it is a great miſtake to think that any man is without a calling, and that God does not expect that every one of us ſhould employ himſelf in doing good in one kind or other. Some perſons indeed, by the privilege of their birth and quality, are above a common trade and profeſſion, but they are not hereby either exempted or excuſed from all buſineſs, and allowed to live unprofitably to others, becauſe they are ſo plentifully provided for themſelves: nay, on the contrary, they have ſo much the greater obligation, having the greater liberty and leiſure to attend the good of others; the higher our character and ſtation is, we have the better opportunities of being publicly uſeful and beneficial; and the heavier will our account be, if we neglect theſe opportunities. Thoſe who are in a low and private condition, can only ſhine to a few; but they that are advanced to a great height above others, may, like the heavenly bodies, diſpenſe a general light and influence, and ſcatter happineſs and bleſſings among all that are below them.

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And as they are capable of doing more good than others, ſo with more eaſe and effect; that which perſons of an inferior rank can hardly bring others to, by all the importunity of counſel and perſuaſion, as namely to the practice of any virtue, and the quitting and abandoning of any vice, a prince and a great man that is good himſelf, may eaſily gain them to, without ever ſpeaking a word to them, by the ſilent authority and powerful allurement of his example. So that though every man have not a particular profeſſion, yet the higheſt among men have ſome employment allotted to them by GOD, ſuitable to their condition, a province which he expects they ſhould adminiſter and adorn with great care.

The great buſineſs of the lower part of mankind is to provide for themſelves the neceſſaries of life, and it is well if they can do it, with all their care and diligence; but thoſe who are of a higher rank, their proper buſineſs and employment is to diſpenſe good to others; which ſurely is a much happier condition and employment, according to that admirable ſaying of our SAVIOUR, mentioned by St. Paul, "It is a more bleſſed thing to give, than to receive." Thoſe of meaner condition can only be men to one another, and it were well if they would be ſo; but he that is highly raiſed and advanced above others, hath the happy opportunity in his hands, if he have but the heart to make uſe of it, to be a kind of GOD to them.

Let no man then, of what birth, or rank, or quality ſoever, think it beneath him to ſerve GOD, and to be uſeful to the benefit and advantage of men; let us remember the Son of GOD, a perſon of the higheſt quality and extraction that ever was, who ſpent himſelf wholly in this bleſſed work of doing good, toiled and laboured in it as it had been for his life, ſubmit-

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ed to all the circumſtances of meanneſs, to all the degrees of contempt, to all kind of hardſhip and ſufferings, for the benefit and ſalvation of men, ſweat drops of blood, and at laſt poured it all forth in full ſtreams, to ſave us from eternal miſery and ruin; and is any of us better than "the Son of GOD, the heir of all "things, and the elder brother of us all?" Shall any of us, after this, think ourſelves too good to be employ'd in that work which GOD himſelf diſdained not to do, when he appeared in the likeneſs and nature of man? SERM. CCXII.

If we would eſteem things rightly, and according to reaſon, the true privilege and advantage of greatneſs is, to be able to do more good than others; and in this the majeſty and felicity of GOD himſelf doth chiefly conſiſt, in his ready and forward inclination, and in his infinite power and ability to do good. The creation of the world was a great and glorious deſign; but this GOD only calls his work; but to preſerve and ſupport the creatures which he hath made, to bleſs them and do them good, to govern them by wiſe laws, and to conduct them to that happineſs which he deſigned for them, this is his reſt, his perpetual ſabbath, his great delight and ſatisfaction to all eternity: to do good is our duty and our buſineſs, but it is likewiſe the greateſt pleaſure and recreation, that which refreſheth the heart of GOD and man.

I have inſiſted the longer upon this, that thoſe who are thought to be above any calling, and to have no obligation upon them, but to pleaſe themſelves, may be made ſenſible, that according to their ability and opportunity, they have a great work upon their hands, and more buſineſs to do than other men: which if they would but ſeriouſly mind, they would not only pleaſe GOD, but, I dare ſay, ſatisfy and pleaſe themſelves much better than they do in any other courſe. I

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know it is a duty particularly incumbent upon the lower part of mankind, to be diligent in their particular calling, that ſo they may provide for themſelves and their families; but this is not ſo proper for this place, and if it were, the neceſſity of human life will probably prompt and urge men more powerfully to this, than any argument and perſuaſion that I can uſe. I proceed therefore, in the

Second place, to offer ſome conſiderations to excite our care and diligence in this great work, which GOD hath given us to do in this world, I mean chiefly the buſineſs of religion, in order to the eternal happineſs and ſalvation of our ſouls. And to this purpoſe I ſhall offer five or ſix arguments, reſerving the great motive and conſideration in the text to the laſt, "Becauſe "there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor "wiſdom in the grave, whither thou goeſt."

I. Let us conſider the nature of our work, which is ſuch, as may both excite and encourage our diligence and care about it. It is indeed a ſervice, but ſuch as is our "perfect freedom;" it is the ſervice of GOD, whom to ſerve is the greateſt honour that man or any other creature is capable of; it is obedience, but even obedience, conſidering our ignorance and frailty, is much wiſer and ſafer for us, than a total exemption from all law and rule; for the laws which GOD hath given us, are not impoſed upon us merely for his will and pleaſure, but chiefly for our benefit and advantage. So that to obey and pleaſe GOD, is in truth nothing elſe but to do thoſe things which are really beſt for ourſelves.

Beſides that this work of religion will abundantly recompenſe all the labour and pains it can coſt, if we conſider the fruit and end of it, which is the "ſalva-"tion of our ſouls;" ſo St. Paul aſſures us, Rom. vi. 22.

22. that if we have "our fruit unto holineſs, our end "ſhall be everlaſting life." Nay, this work doth not want it's preſent encouragement and reward, if we conſider the peace and pleaſure which attends it; "Great peace," ſaith David, "have they which love "thy law, and nothing ſhall offend them." Religion doth not deſign to rob men of the true delights of life, of any lawful pleaſure and enjoyment, it only appoints them their due place, and ſeaſon, and meaſure, without which they cannot be truly taſtful and pleaſant: If we make pleaſure and recreation our buſineſs, it will become a burden, and leave a ſting behind it; but if we make it our great buſineſs to be good, and to do good, we ſhall then take true pleaſure in our recreations and refreſhments, we ſhall "eat our bread with joy, and drink our wine with a "merry heart," as Solomon expreſſeth it, a little before the text. Religion doth not ordinarily debar men of any contentment, which they can wiſely and ſafely take, in any of the enjoyments of this life, but directs us to do thoſe things which will yield the trueſt and moſt refined pleaſure, and ſo governs us in the uſe and enjoyment of worldly comforts, that there ſhall be no bitterneſs in them, or after them; and in truth, after all our ſearch and enquiry after pleaſure and happineſs, we ſhall find that there is no ſolid and laſting pleaſure, but in living righteouſly and religiouſly; and the pleaſure of this is ſo great, that a heathen philoſopher, ſpeaking of a virtuous life according to the true precepts of philoſophy, breaks out into this rapture and tranſport concerning the wonderful pleaſure of it, *Vel unus dies vere & ex præceptis tuis actus peccandi immortalitati eſt anteferendus*, "even one "day truly ſpent according to thy precepts, is to be "valued above an immortality of ſinning." There

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is no life ſo pleaſant as that of the pious and good man, who being contented with himſelf, every thing about him contributes to his chearfulneſs, *Gratior it dies, & ſoles melius nitent*, "the day paſſeth more pleaſantly, and the ſun ſhines brighter to him;" and every object which he beholds is more delightful, becauſe the man is at peace and eaſe within himſelf.

II. Let us conſider how great our work is, and then we ſhall eaſily be convinced what care it requires, what diligence it calls for from us. Very few perſons, I doubt, are ſufficiently ſenſible, how much thought and conſideration, how much care and vigilancy, how firm a reſolution and earneſt contention of mind is neceſſary to the buſineſs of religion, to the due cultivating and improving of our minds, to the mortifying and ſubduing of our luſts, to the maſtering and governing of our paſſions, to the reforming of our tempers, to the correcting of all the irregularities of our appetites and affections, and to the reducing of our crooked wills, which have been long obſtinately bent the wrong way, to the ſtreightneſs of that rule which GOD hath given us to walk by.

Few, I fear, conſider how much pains is neceſſary to the ſtoring of our minds with good principles, and to the fixing and riveting in our ſouls all the proper motives and conſiderations to engage us to virtue, that in all the occaſions of our lives they may have their due force and influence upon us. Few of us take pains to underſtand the juſt bounds and limits of our duty, and ſo to attend thereto, as to be always upon our guard againſt the infinite temptations of human life, and the many malicious enemies of our ſouls, that we may not be circumvented by the wiles of the devil, nor caught in thoſe ſnares which he lays before us in our ways, that we may not be wrought upon by the

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nnuations, nor over-reached by the deceitfulneſs of SERM. CCXII.
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How few conſider what care and watchfulneſs of ourſelves, what conſtancy and fervency of prayer to God is neceſſary to the due diſcharge of every part of our duty; or to the right exerciſe of every grace and virtue! beſides an earneſt imploring of the divine aſſiſtance, there is required likewiſe a particular care and application of mind, that we may fail in no point; and that, as St. James expreſſeth it, "we may be entire, wanting nothing;" that our faith and our hope, our devotion and our charity, our humility and our patience, and every other grace may be exerciſed in the beſt manner, and "have it's proper work."

III. Conſider, what incredible pains men will take, what diligence they will uſe for bad purpoſes, and for ends infinitely leſs conſiderable, *ut jugulent homines, surgunt de nocte latrones, ut teipſum serves, non expergiſcere*, "thieves will riſe and travel by night to rob "and kill, and ſhall we uſe no care, no vigilance to "ſave ourſelves?" What drudges and ſlaves are many men to their ſenſual pleaſures and luſts? How hot and fierce upon revenge? And what hazards will they run to ſatisfy this unreaſonable and deviliſh paſſion; and thereby to make way for a ſpeedy and bitter repentance, which always treads upon the heels of revenge? For no ſooner hath any man executed his rage upon another, but his conſcience preſently turns it upon himſelf.

How induſtrious do we ſee men at their recreations and ſports, taking really more pains for the ſake of pleaſure, than the poor man does that works for his living?

What a violent thriſt, and inſatiable covetouſneſs poſſeſſeth ſome men after learning and knowledge?

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how will they toil and watch, wear out their eyes, and waſte their ſpirits, and purſue their ſtudies, not only with the neglect of fitting diverſion, but even of the neceſſary ſupport and reparation of nature, by meat and ſleep? Nay, many times to encreaſe their learning, they weaken their underſtandings, and for the gaining of more knowledge, do diſable that power and faculty which ſhould make uſe of it when they have it.

How will men attend for ſeveral hours to a lewd and extravagant play, and ſit not only with patience, but with delight to hear things ſpoken, which are neither fit to be ſpoken nor heard?

And above all, how eager and earneſt, how buſy and induſtrious are a great part of mankind, in the purſuit of their ambitious and covetous deſigns? How ſorely will they labour and travel? How hardly will they be contented to fare, and how meanly will they live themſelves, to make they know not whom rich; even any body that happens to come in their way, when they make their laſt wills?

And are men at all this pains for compaſſing of their low and mean, of their vile and wicked deſigns, to do themſelves no good; nay, for the moſt part, to hurt and deſtroy themſelves; and are the preſent pleaſures and ſatisfaction of our minds, and eternal life and happineſs in another world, things of no value and eſteem with us? Is ſalvation itſelf ſo ſlight and inconſiderable a thing, that it deſerves none of this care and diligence to be uſed for the obtaining of it?

IV. Conſider that when we come to die, nothing will yield more true and ſolid conſolation to us, than the remembrance of an uſeful and well-ſpent life, a life of great labour and diligence, of great zeal and faithfulneſs in the ſervice of GOD; and on the contrary,

rary, with what grief and regret ſhall we look back upon all thoſe precious hours which we have ſo fondly miſplaced in ſin and vanity? How ſhall we then wiſh that we could recal them and live them over again, that we might ſpend them better? All that time which now lies upon our hands, and we know not how to beſtow it and paſs it away, will then moſt aſſured lie heavy upon our conſciences. What anguiſh and confuſion have I ſeen in the looks and ſpeeches of a dying man, cauſed only by the grievous remembrance of an unprofitable and ill-ſpent life! ſo fooliſh are many men, as never ſeriouſly to think for what end they came into the world, till they are juſt ready to go out of it.

V. Conſider that the degrees of our happineſs in another world, will certainly bear a proportion to the degrees of our diligence and induſtry, in ſerving GOD and doing good. And it is an argument of a mean ſpirit, not to aſpire after the beſt and happieſt condition, which is to be attained by us; to be contented barely to live, when by our pains and induſtry, we may become conſiderable, and raiſe ourſelves above the common level of men, is a ſign of a poor and degenerate mind; ſo is it in the buſineſs of religion, to be contented with any low degrees of virtue and goodneſs, and conſequently of glory and happineſs, when by a great diligence and induſtry in "ſerving our ge-"neration according to the will of GOD," we may be of the number of thoſe, "whoſe reward ſhall be "great in heaven," and have a place there, among thoſe "righteous perſons," who ſhall "ſhine as the "ſun in the kingdom of their Father."

Beſides, that it may prove a thing of dangerous conſequence to us, to deal thus ſtrictly with GOD, and to drive ſo near and hard a bargain with him; we may

eaſily,

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eaſily miſs of happineſs and come ſhort of heaven, if we only deſign juſt to get thither; we may be miſtaken in the degree of holineſs and virtue, which is neceſſary to recommend us to the divine favour and acceptance, and to make us capable of the glorious reward of eternal life: for "unto whomſoever much is "given," ſaith our SAVIOUR, "of him much ſhall "be required;" to him that hath only one talent committed to him, it may be ſufficient to have gained one; but he that hath many talents entruſted with him, may gain one, and yet be "a wicked and "ſlothful ſervant;" proportionably to our advantages and opportunities, our duty encreaſeth upon our hands, and better and greater things may juſtly be expected from us. The conſideration whereof, ſhould make us unwearied in our endeavours of doing good, "and ſtedfaſt and unmoveable, and always "abounding in the work of the LORD, for as much "as we know that our labour ſhall not be in vain "in the LORD.

VI. and laſtly, Let us conſider the argument here in the text, "there is no work, nor device, nor know-"ledge, nor wiſdom in the grave, whither we are "going." *Longe quieſcendi tempora fata dabunt*, we ſhall then "reſt from our labours, and our works "will follow us." This life is the time of our activity and working, the next is the ſeaſon of retribution and recompence; we ſhall then have nothing to do, but either to reap and enjoy the comfort of well-doing, or to repent the folly of an ill-ſpent life, and the irreparable miſchief which thereby we have brought upon ourſelves. "There is no work nor wiſdom in "the grave whither thou goeſt;" intimating that our life is a continual journey towards the grave, ſhorter or longer as GOD pleaſeth; and many times when we think

think ourſelves far from it, we may be juſt upon it, SERM. CCXII.
and ready to ſtumble into it. So that our time of working may be very ſhort, to be ſure it is very uncertain.

And it is very well worth our conſideration, that as "there is no work nor wiſdom in the grave," ſo there is very little to be exerciſed when we come to draw near to it, whether it be by ſickneſs or old age: ſufficient ſurely "for that day will be the evil thereof;" we had need then to have nothing elſe to do, but to be old and weak, to be ſick and die; we ſhall find that to be burden and trouble enough.

"Let us therefore work the work of him that ſent "us into the world, while it is day; for the night "cometh," ſaith our SAVIOUR, (by which may probably be meant, the time of ſickneſs or old age,) "the "night cometh when no man can work;" ſo that what we do we muſt do quickly, mind the work which is before us, and ply it with all our might, as if it were the laſt opportunity we ſhould ever have; and ſo it may prove for ought we know, for it is ten to one but that ſome here preſent, and GOD knows which of us it may be, may now have the laſt opportunity in our hands, and that but a ſlippery hold of it, and may never have this counſel given us again, nor perhaps be long in a capacity to make uſe of it; for when death hath once overtaken us, it will fix us in an unchangeable ſtate; "as the tree falls, ſo it ſhall lie."

This is the time of our work and preparation for another world, and what we do towards it in this life will avail us in the other; but if this opportunity be neglected, there is nothing to be done by us afterwards, but to inherit the fruit of our own folly and neglect, to ſit down in everlaſting ſorrow, and to be immutably fixed in that miſerable ſtate, which whilſt we were in this

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this world we could never be perſuaded to take any tolerable care to avoid.

And if we can do nothing for ourſelves to help and relieve us in that ſtate, much leſs can we think it can be done for us by others, by the conſigning of maſſes and prayers, of merits and indulgences to our uſe and benefit in another world. No, ſo ſoon as ever we are paſſed into the other ſtate, we ſhall enter upon a condition of happineſs or miſery, that is never to be altered. So that this life is the proper ſeaſon for wiſdom to ſhew itſelf, and to exerciſe our beſt induſtry for the attaining of happineſs; it will be too late afterwards to think of altering or bettering our condition, for death will conclude and determine our ſtate one way or other, and what we are when we leave the world, good or bad, fitted for happineſs or miſery, we ſhall remain and continue ſo for ever.

Therefore it infinitely concerns all of us, to exerciſe our beſt wiſdom in this preſent life, and what we have to do for our ſouls, and for all eternity, "to do it with "all our might;" to contrive and uſe the beſt means to be happy, while the opportunity of doing it is yet in our hands; we may eaſily let it ſlip, but no care, no wiſdom, no diligence, no repentance, can retrieve it; when it is once loſt, it is loſt for ever.

Hear then the concluſion of the whole matter; Would we enjoy ourſelves and the peace of our minds while we live? Would we have good hopes and comfort in our death, and after death would we be happy for ever? Let us lay the foundation of all this, in the activity and induſtry of a religious and holy life; a life of unſpotted purity and temperance in the uſe of ſenſual pleaſures, of ſincere piety and devotion towards GOD, of ſtrict juſtice and integrity, and of great goodneſs and charity towards men.

And

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And let us consider that many of us are a great way already on our journey towards the grave, that our day is declining apace, and the shadows of the evening begin to be stretched out, therefore that little of our life which is yet behind us should be precious to us, *ut esse solis gratius lumen solet, jam jam cadentis*, we should improve that which yet remains, as it were for our lives, always remembring that our only opportunity of working, of designing and doing great and happy things for ourselves, is on this side the grave, and that this opportunity will expire and die with us; "for there is no work, nor device, nor "knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither we "are going."

"Now God of his infinite mercy grant, that we "may all of us know in this our day, the things "which belong to our present peace and future hap- "pines, before they be hid from our eyes, for his "mercy's sake in Jesus Christ; to whom with "thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all ho- "nour and glory, thanksgiving and praise, now and "for evermore.

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Of the bleſſedneſs of giving, more than that of receiving.

ACTS xx. 35.

And to remember the words of the LORD JESUS, *how he ſaid, it is more bleſſed to give, than to receive.*

The whole Verſe runs thus,

I have ſhewed you all things, how that ſo labouring, ye ought to ſupport the weak, and to remember the words of the LORD JESUS, *how he ſaid, it is more bleſſed to give, than to receive.*

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THE words which I have read to you, have this particular advantage to recommend them to our more attentive conſideration, that they are a remarkable ſaying of our LORD himſelf, not recorded by any of the evangeliſts among his other ſayings and diſcourſes, but remembred by the apoſtles, and by ſome of them delivered to St. Paul, and by him preſerved to us in his farewel-ſpeech to the elders of Epheſus. In which, after he had given them ſome needful advice, and commended them to the grace of GOD, he appeals to them concerning the integrity of his converſation among them; that he was ſo far from ſeeking his own advantage and from coveting any thing that was theirs, that he had not only ſupported himſelf, but alſo relieved others by the labour of his own hands; giving them herein a great example of charity, which, it ſeems, he was wont to enforce upon

n them by an excellent ſaying of our LORD, "It is more bleſſed to give, than to receive." SERM. CCXIII.

And it is really a particular endearment of this ſaying to us, that being omitted by the evangeliſts, and n danger of being loſt and forgotten, it was ſo happily retrieved by St. Paul, and recorded by St. Luke. The common ſayings of ordinary perſons periſh without regard, and are ſpilt like water upon the ground, which no body goes about to gather up; but the little nd ſhort ſayings of wiſe and excellent men are of great alue, like the duſt of gold, or the leaſts ſparks of diamonds. And ſuch is this ſaying of our LORD, which not only valuable out of reſpect to it's author, but for he ſake of that admirable ſenſe which is contained in it.

Some interpreters have needleſly troubled themelves to find theſe words, or ſomething equivalent to hem in the goſpel. That the ſenſe of them may be nferred from ſeveral paſſages in the goſpel, none will eny; but that they are either expreſly to be found here, or that there is any ſaying that ſounds to the ame ſenſe, I think no body can ſhew. Beſides that St. Paul cites a particular ſentence or ſaying of our LORD, hat was ῥηθὲν, and in thoſe very words ſpoken by him.

And there is no reaſon to imagine, that the goſpels re a perfect and exact account of all the ſayings and ctions of our LORD, though St. Luke calls his goſpel "a treatiſe of all things that JESUS did and ſpake;" hat is, of the principal actions of his life, and the ſubtance of his diſcourſes, at leaſt ſo much of them as is eedful for us to know: for St. Luke leaves out ſeveral things related by the other evangeliſts. And St. ohn expreſly tells us, that JESUS did innumerable hings not recorded in the hiſtory of his life: and here is no doubt but the diſciples of our LORD remember'd many particular ſayings of his, not ſet down in

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the goſpels, which upon occaſion they did relate and communicate to others, as they did this to St. Paul.

The words themſelves are the propoſition I ſhall ſpeak to, "It is a more bleſſed thing to give, than to "receive." This, I know, ſeems a parodox to moſt men, who know no happineſs but in hoarding up what they have, and in receiving and heaping up more; but as ſtrange as this ſaying may appear, the ſenſe of it is owned and aſſented to by thoſe great oracles of reaſon, the wiſeſt and moſt conſiderate heathen; τῆς ἀρετῆς μᾶλλον τὸ εὖ ποιεῖν ἢ τὸ εὖ πάσχειν, "it is a "more virtuous thing to do than to receive good," ſays Ariſtotle; which according to his opinion was to ſay, it a greater happineſs, becauſe he placed happineſs in the practice and exerciſe of virtue. To the ſame purpoſe is that ſaying of Plutarch, ἐν ποιεῖν ἡδίόν ἐστιν ἢ πάσχειν, "there is more pleaſure in doing a "kindneſs, than in taking one." And that of Seneca, *Malim non recipere beneficia, quàm non dare*; "of "the two, I had rather not receive benefits, than not "beſtow them." And that the heathen have ſpoken things to the ſame ſenſe with this ſaying of our SAVIOUR's, is ſo far from being any prejudice to this ſaying of our SAVIOUR, that it is a great commendation of it, as being an argument that our SAVIOUR hath herein ſaid nothing, but what is very agreeable to the beſt notions of our minds, and to the higheſt reaſon and wiſdom of mankind. In the handling of this propoſition, I ſhall do theſe two things.

Firſt, endeavour to convince men of the truth and reaſonableneſs of it.

Secondly, to perſuade men to act ſuitably to it.

Firſt, to convince men of the truth and reaſonableneſs of this principle, that "it is more bleſſed to give, "than to receive." And this will fully appear by *conſidering* theſe three things. I. That

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I. That it is an argument of a more happy ſpirit and temper.

II. Of a more happy ſtate and condition. And,

III. That it ſhall have the happineſs of a greater reward.

I. To be governed by this principle, is an argument of a more happy ſpirit and temper. To do good, to be uſeful and beneficial to others, to be of a kind and obliging diſpoſition, of a tender and compaſſionate ſpirit, ſenſible of the ſtraits and miſeries of others, ſo as to be ready to eaſe and relieve them (for to this kind of goodneſs and charity the apoſtle applies this ſaying of our SAVIOUR, as appears by the context) this certainly is the happieſt ſpirit and temper in the world; and is an argument of a noble, and generous, and large heart, that is not contracted within itſelf, and confined to little and narrow deſigns, and takes care of no body but itſelf, envying that others ſhould ſhare with it, and partake of its happineſs; but is free and open, "ready to do good, and willing to "communicate," and thinks it's own happineſs increaſed, by making others happy.

It is the property of narrow and envious ſpirits, to think their own happineſs the greater, becauſe they have it alone to themſelves; but the nobleſt and moſt heavenly diſpoſitions deſire that others ſhould ſhare with them in it. Of all beings GOD is the fartheſt removed from envy and ill-will, and the nearer any creature approacheth to him, the farther it is from this helliſh diſpoſition. For it is the temper of the devil to grudge happineſs to others; he envied that man ſhould be in paradiſe, and was reſtleſs till he had got him out.

Some perfections are of a more ſolitary nature and diſpoſition, and ſhine brighteſt when they are attained to but by few, as knowledge and power: but the na-

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ture of goodneſs is to diffuſe and communicate itſelf, and the more it is communicated, the more glorious it is. And therefore knowledge and power may be in a nature moſt contrary to GOD's; the devil hath theſe perfections in a high degree.

To receive good from others is no certain argument of virtue and merit, for the unworthy and unthankful often receive benefits: but to be good and do good, is the excellency of virtue, becauſe it is to reſemble GOD in that which is the moſt amiable and glorious of all his other perfections. And therefore when Moſes deſires "to ſee GOD's glory," Exod. xxxiii. 19. he tells him, that "he will cauſe all his goodneſs to "paſs before him." Without goodneſs the power and wiſdom of GOD would be terrible, and raiſe great dread and ſuperſtition in the minds of men. Without goodneſs power would be tyranny and oppreſſion, and wiſdom would degenerate into craft and miſchievous contrivance. So that a being endowed with all power and wiſdom, and yet wanting goodneſs, would be a dreadful and omnipotent miſchief. We are apt to dread power, and to admire knowledge, and to ſuſpect great wiſdom and prudence; but we can heartily love and reverence nothing but true goodneſs. It is not the infinite power and knowledge of GOD conſidered abſtractedly, and in themſelves, but theſe in conjunction with his great goodneſs, that make him at once the moſt awful and amiable Being in the World. Which is the reaſon why our SAVIOUR, Matt. v. 48. ſpeaks of the mercy, and goodneſs, and patience of GOD, as the top and ſum of the divine perfections; "Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in "heaven is perfect." How is that? In being "good "to the evil and unthankful, as GOD is, who makes "his ſun to riſe, and his rain to fall, not only on the

"juſt,

'just, but unjust." And therefore St. Luke renders it, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father which 'is in heaven is merciful." To be good and merciful as God is, is to be perfect as he is; because it is to imitate him in that which is his chief perfection. SERM. CCXIII.

Gratitude is one of the noblest virtues, and our goodness to men is gratitude in us to God. It is an acknowledgment of the blessings we have received from God; the best use we can make of them, and the best requital we can make to him for all his benefits. For we can give him nothing again, because he stands in need of nothing. But a truly grateful person, who hath a kindness done to him by one that is out of all capacity and reach of requital, will require whether there be any of his family and relations to whom he may shew a kindness for his sake. Yea benefits have often been requited by thankful persons, upon those who did but resemble their benefactors, though they were no ways related to them. Though we can do nothing to God, yet we may do it to men, who are "made after the image of God." We may shew kindness to his relations, and to those of his household and family, to his creatures, to his servants, to his friends, and to his children here in the earth.

Besides that our goodness to others like ourselves is an argument of great consideration and prudence; it is a sign that we know ourselves, and consider what we are, and what we may be; it shews that we have a due sense of the indigence and infirmity of human nature, and of the change and vicissitude of human affairs; it is a just sense and acknowledgment of our state, that we are insufficient for our own happiness, and must depend upon the kindness, and good-will, and friendship of other men; that we all either do or may stand in need of others one time or other: for

SERM. CCXIII. he who is now in the greateſt plenty and abundance of all things, and thinks "his mountain ſo ſtrong, that "he can never be moved," may by a ſudden revolution of fortune, by a thouſand accidents, be thrown down from his height of proſperity, into the depth of miſery and neceſſity.

And as it is an argument of conſideration, ſo of great prudence. He that is good to others, apt to commiſerate their ſad caſe, and to relieve them in their ſtraits, takes the wiſeſt and ſureſt way that can be, to encline and engage others to be good to him, when it ſhall fall to his lot to ſtand in need of their kindneſs and pity. Upon this account our SAVIOUR commends the prudence of the unjuſt ſteward, who laid in for the kindneſs of others, againſt himſelf ſhould have occaſion for it.

And though it ſhould happen otherwiſe, and that we ſhould have an uninterrupted tenor of proſperity (which few or none have) or that coming to ſtand in need of others, our kindneſs ſhould meet with no equal returns, yet it would not be quite loſt. For as Seneca truly ſays, *delectat etiam ſterilis beneficii conſcientia*, though our charity ſhould fall upon ſtony and barren ground, and we ſhould find no fruit of it from thoſe whom we have obliged, yet there is a pleaſure in being conſcious to ourſelves, that we have done well, what was worthy and generous, and what became wiſe and conſiderate men to do, whatever the event and ſucceſs be: for ſetting aſide all ſelfiſh reſpects, purely out of humanity and charity, and a generous compaſſion, we ſhould be ready, as we have opportunity, to do good to all that ſtand in need of our kindneſs and help.

So that a diſpoſition to do good is the beſt and happieſt temper of mind, becauſe it is the neareſt reſemblance

blance of the divine nature, which is perfectly happy: it is a grateful acknowledgment of our obligations to GOD, and all that we can render to him for his benefits; it is an argument of great wiſdom and conſideration; it gives eaſe end ſatisfaction to our minds: and the reflection upon any good that we have done, is certainly the greateſt contentment and pleaſure in the world, and a felicity much beyond that of the greateſt fortune of this world; whereas the ſpirit contrary to this is always uneaſy to itſelf; the envious and malicious, the hard-hearted and ill-natured man carries his own torment and hell about him, his mind is full of tumultuous agitations and unquiet thoughts: but were our nature rectified, and brought back to its primitive frame and temper, we ſhould take no ſuch pleaſure in any thing as in acts of kindneſs and compaſſion, which are ſo ſuitable and agreeable to our nature, that they are peculiarly called humanity, as if without this temper we were not truly men, but ſomething elſe diſguiſed under a human ſhape. SERM. CCXIII.

II. "To give," is an argument of a more happy ſtate and condition, than "to receive." To receive from others is an argument of indigency, and plainly ſhews that we are in want and neceſſity; either that we ſtand in need of ſomething, or that we think we do, and either of theſe conditions is far from perfect happineſs: but to give, is an argument of fulneſs and ſufficiency, that we have more than is neceſſary for ourſelves, and ſomething to ſpare.

To receive kindneſs from others, ſuppoſeth we ſtand in need of it; and to ſtand in need of it, is to be in a ſtate of being obliged and indebted. Obligation is a dear thing, and a real debt which lies heavy and uneaſy upon a grateful mind: ſo much obligation as any man hath to another, ſo much he hath loſt of his own

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liberty and freedom; for it gives him that hath obliged us, a ſuperiority and advantage over us. And what Solomon ſays of the borrower, that "he is a "ſervant to the lender," is in proportion true in this caſe, that the receiver is a ſervant to the giver.

But to be able to benefit others, is a condition of freedom and ſuperiority, and is ſo far from impairing our liberty, that it ſhews our power: and the happineſs which we confer upon others, by doing them good, is not only a contentment to ourſelves, but we do in ſome ſort enjoy the happineſs we give, in being conſcious to ourſelves that we are the authors of it. And could we but once come to this excellent temper, to delight in the good that others enjoy, as if it were our own (and it is our own, if we be the inſtruments of it, and take pleaſure in it) I ſay, could we but once come to this temper, we need not envy the wealth and ſplendor of the moſt proſperous upon earth; for upon theſe terms the happineſs of the whole world would in ſome ſort be ours, and we ſhould have a ſhare in the pleaſure and ſatisfaction of all that good which happens to any man any way, eſpecially by our means.

To depend upon another, and to receive from him, and to be beholden to him, is the neceſſary imperfection of creatures: but to confer benefits upon others, is to reſemble GOD, and to approach towards divinity. Ariſtotle could ſay, that by narrowneſs and ſelfiſhneſs, by envy and ill-will, men degenerate into beaſts, and become wolves and tygers to one another; but by goodneſs and kindneſs, by mutual compaſſion and helpfulneſs, men become gods to one another. To be a benefactor, is to be as like GOD as it is poſſible for men to be; and the more any one partakes of this divine quality and diſpoſition, the liker and the nearer he is to GOD, "who is good to all, and whoſe tender mercies "*are over* all his other works." The

The bleſſed angels, who behold the face of GOD continually, are as it were perfectly transformed into the image of the divine goodneſs, and therefore the work which with ſo much chearfulneſs and vigour they employ themſelves in, is to be "miniſtring ſpirits for the "good of the elect," to bring men to goodneſs, and to encourage, and aſſiſt, and comfort them in well-doing. And our bleſſed LORD, when he was upon earth, did in nothing ſhew himſelf more like the Son of GOD than in "going about doing good." And the wonderful works which he did, gave teſtimony of his divinity, not ſo much as they were acts of power as of goodneſs, and wrought for the benefit and advantage of men. And the true advantage of greatneſs, and wealth, and power, does not conſiſt in this, that it ſets men above others, but that it puts them in a capacity of doing more good than others. Men are apt to call them their betters, who are higher and richer than themſelves; but in a true and juſt eſteem of things, they only are our betters who do more good than we. From the meaneſt creature below us, up to GOD himſelf, they are the beſt and happieſt and moſt perfect beings, who are moſt uſeful and beneficial to others, who have the moſt power and the ſtrongeſt inclinations to do good. SERM. CCXIII.

III. "To give," that is, to be beneficial and to do good to others, hath the happineſs of a great reward. There is no grace or virtue whatſoever, which hath in ſcripture the encouragement of more and greater promiſes than this, of happineſs in general; of temporal happineſs in this life; of happineſs at death; and of everlaſting happineſs in the world to come.

1. For promiſes of happineſs in general. "He hath "diſperſed, he hath given to the poor, his righteouſ-"neſs endureth for ever," that is, ſhall never be forgotten, ſhall not paſs unrewarded. Prov. xiv. 21.

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"He that giveth to the poor, happy is he." Matt. v. 7. "Bleſſed are the merciful, for they ſhall obtain "mercy." Luke vi. 38. "Give, and it ſhall be gi- "ven unto you, good meaſure, preſſed down, and "ſhaken together, and running over, ſhall men give "into your boſom: for with the ſame meaſure that "ye mete withal, it ſhall be meaſured to you again;" that is, according to our goodneſs and compaſſion towards others, we muſt expect to find the charity of men, and the compaſſions of GOD towards us. Job ſpeaks as if ſome eminent and peculiar bleſſing did attend and follow acts of charity, Job xxix. 13. "The bleſſing "of him that was ready to periſh, came upon me."

2. Promiſes of temporal happineſs in this life. Pſal. xxxvii. 3. "Truſt in the LORD, and do good: ſo "ſhalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou ſhalt "be fed." Prov. xxviii. 27. "He that giveth to "the poor, ſhall not lack." Nay, GOD hath promiſed to have a particular reſpect to ſuch as do good, in every condition, and all kinds of troubles that befal them. Pſal. xli. 1, 2, 3. "Bleſſed is he that con- "ſidereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in "time of trouble. The LORD will preſerve him, and "keep him alive, and he ſhall be bleſſed upon the "earth; and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will "of his enemies. The LORD will ſtrengthen him "upon the bed of languiſhing: thou wilt make all "his bed in his ſickneſs."

3. Of happineſs in death. "The righteous," ſaith Solomon, Prov. xiv. 32. "hath hope in his death." By the righteous in ſcripture is frequently meant the merciful and good man. And ſo it is to be underſtood, as appears from the context, "He that oppreſ- "ſeth the poor, reproacheth his Maker: but he that "honoureth him, hath mercy upon the poor. The "wicked

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'wicked is driven away in his wickedneſs: but the 'righteous hath hope in his death." If GOD deſign o ſend calamities upon the earth, upon the place where the good man lives, which it would grieve him o ſee, or which he might be involved in, ſo as either o make his life uncomfortable, or to cut him off by violent death; GOD conſiders the merciful man, nd removes him out of the way, into a better and afer place, Iſai. lvii. 1. "The merciful man is taken 'away from the evil to come."

4. The promiſes of eternal life and happineſs in the world to come. Luke xiv. 13, 14. "But when thou "makeſt a feaſt, call the poor, the maimed, the lame "and the blind: and thou ſhalt be bleſſed. For they "cannot recompenſe thee: for thou ſhalt be recom-"penſed at the reſurrection of the juſt. And chap. xvi. 9. "And I ſay unto you," ſaith our LORD, "make to yourſelves friends of the mammon of un-"righteouſneſs," that is, to do good with what you have, "that when ye fail, they may receive you into "everlaſting habitations." 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19. "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they "be not high-minded, nor truſt in uncertain riches; "but in the living GOD, who giveth us richly all "things to enjoy: that they do good, that they be "rich in good works, ready to diſtribute, willing to "communicate, laying up in ſtore for themſelves a "good foundation againſt the time to come, that "they may lay hold on eternal life." And the more to fix upon our minds the neceſſity of doing good, eſpecially in ways of mercy and charity, our LORD repreſents this as the great matter of enquiry at the great day of judgment. How they have behaved themſelves in this kind, what good they have done, or omitted and neglected to do, eſpecially to thoſe who

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are in miſery and want: and as if the ſentence of eternal happineſs and miſery would accordingly paſs upon them. And this, methinks, ſhould make a mighty impreſſion upon us, to think that when we ſhall appear before the great judge of the world, we are to expect mercy from him according to the meaſure that we have ſhewed it to others.

And now if men be thoroughly convinced of the happineſs of this temper, methinks it ſhould be no difficult matter to perſuade them to it. If we believe this ſaying of our Lord, that "it is more bleſſed to "give, than to receive;" let us do accordingly.

I know that to carnal and earthly-minded men, this muſt needs ſeem a new and wrong way to happineſs. For if we may judge of men's perſuaſions by their practice (which ſeems to be a reaſonable and good ſure way of judging) I am afraid it will appear, that few believe this to be the way to happineſs. If we mind the courſe of the world, and the actions of men, it is but too evident that moſt men place their greateſt felicity in receiving and getting the good things of this world; "almoſt all ſeek their own things, and but "few the good of others. Many ſay, who will ſhew "us," who will do us "any good?" but few aſk that queſtion, "what good thing ſhall I do, that I may "inherit eternal life?" And when our Lord tells men, that they muſt "give to the poor," if they would have "treaſure in heaven;" that they muſt be charitable, if they would be happy; that "it is a more "bleſſed thing to give, than to receive;" theſe are ſad and melancholy ſayings to thoſe who have great poſſeſſions; and moſt men are ready with the young man in the goſpel, to part with our Lord, and to break with him upon theſe terms.

But let us remember, that this was the ſaying of our

Lord

LORD JESUS, whom we all profeſs to believe, and to imitate in all things: but more eſpecially let us do ſo in this, becauſe it was not a bare ſpeculation, a fine and glorious ſaying, like thoſe of the philoſophers, who ſaid great and glorious things, but did them not; but this was his conſtant practice, the great work and buſineſs of his life. He who pronounced it the moſt bleſſed thing to do good, ſpent his whole life in this work, and "went about doing good." To this end all his activity and endeavours were bent. This was the life which GOD himſelf, when he was pleaſed to become man, thought fit to lead in the world, "giving us "herein an example, that we ſhould follow his ſteps." He made full trial and experience of the happineſs of this temper and ſpirit; for he was all on the giving hand. He would receive no portion and ſhare of the good things of this world; he refuſed the greateſt offers. When the people would have made him a king, he withdrew and hid himſelf; he was contented to be worſe accommodated than the creatures below us. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have "neſts: but the Son of man hath not where to lay his "head." He would not ſo much as have any fixed abode and habitation, that he might be at liberty "to "go about doing good." He received nothing but injuries and affronts, baſe and treacherous uſage from an ungrateful world, to whom he was ſo great and ſo univerſal a benefactor. The whole buſineſs of his life was to do good, and to ſuffer evil for ſo doing. So fixed and ſteady was he to his own principle and ſaying, "It is a more bleſſed thing to give, than to re-"ceive." He gave away all that he had to do us good, he parted with his glory and his life, "emptied him-"ſelf, and became of no reputation; and being rich, "for our ſakes became poor, that we through his po-"verty *might be made rich.*"

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So

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So that he adviſeth us nothing, but what he did himſelf; nor impoſeth any thing upon us, from which he himſelf deſired to be excuſed. And ſurely we have great reaſon to be in great love with this pattern, when that very goodneſs which he propounds to our imitation, was all laid out upon us, and redounds to our benefit and advantage; when our ſalvation and happineſs are the effects of that goodneſs and compaſſion which he exerciſed in the world. He did it all purely for our ſakes: whereas all the good we do to others, is a greater good done to ourſelves.

So that here is an example and experiment of the thing in the greateſt and moſt famous inſtance that the whole world can afford. The beſt and happieſt man that ever was, the Son of GOD and the SAVIOUR of men, and who is the moſt worthy to be the pattern of all mankind, "went about doing good," and governed his whole life, and all the actions of it by this principle, that "it is more bleſſed to give, than to receive. Let the ſame mind be in us that was in "JESUS CHRIST: let us go and do likewiſe."

SERMON CCXIV.

The evil of corrupt communication.

EPHES. iv. 29.

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth; but that which is good to the uſe of edifying, that it may miniſter grace to the hearers.

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AS diſcourſes againſt ſin and vice in general are of great uſe, ſo it is likewiſe very neceſſary to level them againſt the particular vices of men, and to endea-

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ndeavour by proper and intrinſical arguments, taken rom the nature of that vice we treat of, to diſſuade nd deter them from it; becauſe this carries the diſcourſe home to the conſciences of men, and leaves them no way of eſcape. For this reaſon, and in compliance with their majeſties pious proclamation, for he diſcountenancing and ſuppreſſing of profaneneſs nd vice, I have choſen to treat upon this ſubject, of orrupt and filthy communication, as being one of the eigning vices of this wicked and adulterous generaion; of the evil whereof the generality of men are leſs ſenſible than almoſt of any other, that is ſo frequently and ſo expreſly branded in ſcripture. And to this purpoſe I have pitched upon the words which I have read unto you, as containing a plain and expreſs prohibition of this vice. "Let no corrupt commu-"nication," &c.

I remember St. Auſtin in one of his epiſtles tells us, that Tully, the great maſter of the art of ſpeaking, ſays of one of the great orators, *Nullum unquam verbum quod revocare vellet, emiſit.* "That no word e-"ver fell from him, that he could wiſh to have re-"called." This I doubt is above the perfection of human eloquence, for a man always to make ſuch a choice of his words, and to place them ſo fitly, that nothing he ever ſaid could be changed for the better. But the greateſt faults of ſpeech are not thoſe which offend againſt the rules of eloquence; but of piety, and virtue, and good manners: and who can ſay that his tongue is free from all faults in this kind, and no word ever proceeded from him which he could wiſh to have recalled. "In many things," ſays St. James, chap. iii. 2. "we offend all;" and in this kind as much perhaps, and as often as in any. He is a good and a happy man indeed, that ſeldom or never offends

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with his tongue. "If any man," as St. James goes on, "offend not in word, the same is a perfect man;" that is, he hath attained to an eminent degree of virtue indeed, and is above the common rate of men, and may reasonably be presumed blameless in the general course of his life and practice; "and able," as it follows, "to bridle the whole body;" that is, to order his whole conversation aright.

To govern the tongue is a matter of great difficulty, and consequently of great wisdom, and care, and circumspection; and therefore one of the great endeavours of a wise and good man, should be to govern his words by the rules of reason and religion, and we should every one of us resolve and say, as David does, Psal. xxxix. 1. "I will take heed to my "ways, that I sin not with my tongue." For as the virtues, so the vices of the tongue are many and great. In respect of the virtues of it, David calls it the best member we have; because of all the members and instruments of the body, it is capable of giving the greatest glory to GOD, and of doing the greatest good and benefit to men. And in respect of the vices of it, it may be as truly said to be the worst member that we have; because it is capable of doing the greatest dishonour to GOD, and the greatest mischief and harm among men. So that upon all accounts, we ought to have a great care of the government of our tongue, which is capable of being so useful and serviceable to the best and worst purposes, according as we restrain it and keep it in order, or let it loose to sin and folly.

And among all the vices of the tongue, as none is more common, so none is more misbecoming, and more contrary to the modesty of a man, and the gravity of a Christian, than filthy and obscene talk; of the odious nature, and the evil and mischievous consequences

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ſequences whereof, both to ourſelves and others, I deſign by GOD's aſſiſtance to treat at this time, from the words which I have read unto you, "Let no cor-"rupt communication, &c."

That by corrupt or rotten communication, is here meant filthy and obſcene talk, is generally agreed among interpreters. "By that which is good to the "uſe of edyfying," is meant ſuch diſcourſe, as is apt to build us up in knowledge and goodneſs, to make the hearers wiſer and better. "That it may miniſ-"ter grace unto the hearers," that is, ſuch kind of diſcourſe as is acceptable to all; not nauſeous and offenſive to ſober and virtuous perſons, not apt to grate upon chaſte and modeſt ears, and to put the hearers out of countenance.

So that the apoſtle doth here ſtrictly forbid all lewd and filthy diſcourſe among Chriſtians; and enjoins them ſo to converſe with one another, that all their diſcourſes may miniſter mutual benefit and advantage to one another, and tend to the promoting of piety and virtue; and may likewiſe be grateful to the hearers, carefully avoiding every thing that may put them to the bluſh, or any ways treſpaſs upon modeſty and good manners, as all filthy communication does.

This ſort of argument, though it be frequently mentioned in ſcripture, yet it is very ſeldom treated of in the pulpit, becauſe it is a matter hard to be handled in a cleanly manner, and the preacher muſt always take good heed to himſelf, that his diſcourſe be free from the contagion of that vice, which he reproves and deſigns to correct and cure. And therefore to diſſuade and deter men from this evil practice, ſo rife and common in the world, and that not only among the profane and diſſolute ſort of perſons,

but

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but thoſe likewiſe who would ſeem to be more ſtrict and religious, I hope it may be ſufficient to all conſiderate perſons, plainly to repreſent to them the heinous nature of the thing itſelf, together with the evil and dangerous conſequences of it, both to our ſelves and to others. And this I ſhall endeavour to do in the moſt general and wary terms, keeping all along, as much as is poſſible, aloof and at a diſtance from any thing that might either offend the chaſte and modeſt, or infect lewd and diſſolute minds, which like tinder are always ready to take fire at the leaſt ſpark.

Having premiſed this in general, my work at this time ſhall be to offer ſuch particular conſiderations, as may fully convince men of the great evil and danger of this practice; and I hope may effectually prevail with them to leave it, and break it off. And they ſhall be theſe following.

I. That all filthy and corrupt communication is evidently contrary to nature, which is careful to hide and ſuppreſs, whatever in the general eſteem of the ſober part of mankind hath any thing of turpitude and uncomelineſs in it: and wherever nature hath thought fit to draw a vail, we ſhould neither by words nor actions expoſe ſuch things to open view. *Quæ natura occultavit*, ſays Tully, de Offic. Lib. 1. *eadem omnes, qui ſanâ ſunt mente removent ab oculis*, "Thoſe things which nature hath thought fit to hide, "all men that are in their wits endeavour to keep "out of ſight," *Nos autem naturam ſequamur*, ſays the ſame excellent moraliſt, ibid. *Et ab omni quod abhorret ab oculorum auriumque approbatione fugiamus*, "Let us," ſays he, "follow nature, and flee "every thing that is offenſive either to the eye or "ear of men." And this is ſo plain a leſſon of nature, that an actor in a play will never fall into that abſur-

abſurdity, as to repreſent a grave and virtuous perſon offering any obſcene or immodeſt word: and as the ſame author reaſons, *Hiſtorio hoc videbit in ſcenâ, quod non videbit ſapiens in vitâ?* "ſhall an actor ſee this "to be improper upon the ſtage, and a wiſe man "not diſcern the abſurdity and indecency of it in his "life and converſation?"

II. All corrupt and filthy communication is a notorious abuſe of one of the greateſt and beſt gifts which GOD hath given us, and does directly contradict the natural end and uſe of ſpeech. Our tongue is our glory, as the holy pſalmiſt often calls it, who had duly conſidered the excellency and uſe of this faculty, and took great care to employ it to the purpoſes for which GOD gave it, and is herein an admirable patern for us.

And next to our reaſon and underſtanding, our ſpeech doth moſt remarkably diſtinguiſh us from the beaſts and ſets us above them. *Hoc uno præſtamus vel maximè feris, quod colloquimur inter nos, & quod exprimere dicendo ſenſa poſſumus*, ſays the great Roman orator, Cicero de Orat. lib. i. "By this one thing "we excel the beaſts in a very high degree, that we "can talk together, and by ſpeech declare out minds "to one another." By our underſtanding we know GOD, and by our tongues we confeſs and praiſe him: but to uſe our tongues to lewd and filthy diſcourſe, is to pervert and abuſe one of the beſt and nobleſt faculties, which GOD hath given us; it is to affront him with his own gifts, and to fight againſt him with his own weapons. "Do we thus requite the "LORD? fooliſh creatures and unthankful!"

The two great ends for which this faculty of ſpeech is given us, are to glorify GOD our maker, and to edify man our neighbour: but all corrupt communi-

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cation contradicts both these ends; because, instead of praising God with pure hearts and lips, we do greatly dishonour him, by polluting our tongues with lewd and filthy talk: for hereby we offer a direct affront to his holy nature and laws. This renders us altogether unfit for the worship and service of Almighty God, who is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity" and impurity of any kind. For how can we think that he will accept those prayers and praises, which are offered to him by such impure and unhallowed lips? when we dishonour God with the same mouth, that we pretend to glorify him? and commit sin with the same tongue that we confess it? How can we hope that he will accept the sacrifice of such polluted lips, out of which proceed things so contrary and inconsistent?

Those who thus pervert the use of speech, and instead of glorifying him who gave them this excellent gift, and setting forth his praise, defile their tongues with filthy and impure language, give just occasion to complain of them, as Elihu does of the wicked in his time, Job xxxv. 10, 11. "None saith, where is "God my maker, who giveth songs in the night? "who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, "and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven." His meaning is, that they did not glorify God their maker, by singing his praises, which by being indued with this noble faculty of speech, (which he had denied to the creatures below man, the beasts and birds,) they only were capable of performing. The consideration of this high privilege, by which we do so much excel the creatures below us, ought to be a mighty obligation upon us, to employ this gift of God in the service, and to the glory of the giver, and make us very careful not to offend him by it, or by any defilement of it, to render it unfit for one of

the

principal uſes for which GOD beſtowed it upon us. SERM. CCXIV.
Another great end of ſpeech is to edify our neigh-
ur. So the apoſtle here tells us in the text, that
thing ſhould "proceed out of our mouths," but
at is "good for the uſe of edifying, that it may
miniſter grace to the hearers." But inſtead of that,
rupt communication offends the chaſte and virtu-
s, and corrupts them who have vicious inclinations,
exciting and cheriſhing lewd imaginations in them,
d making "them that are filthy more filthy ſtill."

III. Corrupt communication is an evidence of a
rrupt and impure heart, as polluted ſtreams are a
n that the fountain is impure from whence they
ne. An impure mind may be covered and diſ-
iſed by natural ſhame and outward reverence, in
gard to the company, or from ſome other particu-
deſign; but when it breaks out at any time in
vd talk, our ſpeech betrays us, and diſcovers the
ard thoughts of our hearts, and makes them vi-
le to every eye. For as our SAVIOUR ſays, "Out
of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh."
atth. xii. 34, 35. "How can ye, being evil, ſpeak
good things? for out of the abundance of the heart
the mouth ſpeaketh. A good man out of the
good treaſure of the heart, bringeth forth good
things: and an evil man out of the evil treaſure,
bringeth forth evil things."

There is not, ſays an excellent divine of our own,
r. Barrow, "a more certain ſign of a mind utterly
debauched from piety and virtue, than affecting
ſuch talk. A vain mind naturally venteth itſelf in
frothy diſcourſe; and luſt, boiling within, foams
out in filthy talk." It is St. Jude's metaphor,
hen he deſcribes that impure ſect of the Gnoſticks,
: ſays of them, that "they were continually foam-

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" ing out their own ſhame," ver. 13. that is, by their lewd words and deeds they diſcovered the inward filthineſs of their hearts. And therefore it is Tully's advice to him that would be perfectly virtuous, and not defective in any part of his duty; *imprimis provideat, ne ſermo vitium aliquod indicit ineſſe moribus*; de Offic. lib. i. " Let him in the firſt place," ſays he, " take great care, that his ſpeech betray not ſome " vice or fault of his manners." Ἀνδρὸς χαρακτὴρ ἐκ λόγου γνωρίζεται, " a man's character is common- " ly taken for his talk;" οἷος ὁ τρόπος, τοιοῦτος καὶ ὁ λόγος, ſays Ariſtides, " ſuch as are the man- " ners of a man, ſuch is his diſcourſe;" and Quintilian, lib. xi. c. 1. *profert enim mores plerumque oratio, & animi ſecreta detegit; nec ſine cauſâ Græci prodiderunt, ut vivit, quemquam etiam dicere.* " Our " ſpeech, for the moſt part, declares our manners, " and diſcovers the ſecrets of our hearts; ſo that not " without cauſe was it become a proverbial ſaying " among the Greeks, that, As the man lives, ſo al- " ſo he ſpeaks." And to the ſame purpoſe the wiſe ſon of Sirah, Eccluſ. xxvii. 6, 7. " The fruit de- " clareth if the tree hath been dreſſed; ſo is the " utterance of a conceit in the heart of man. Praiſe " no man before thou heareſt him ſpeak: for this is " the trial of men.". And ver. 13. " The diſcourſe " of fools is irkſom, and their ſport is in the wan- " tonneſs of ſin."

Immodeſt ſpeech is not only an indication of an unchaſte mind; but draws likewiſe a great ſuſpicion upon a man's life. So ſtrict a connexion commonly is there between a man's thoughts and words, and between his words and actions, that they are generally preſumed to be all of a piece, and agreeable to one another.

IV. Cor-

IV. Corrupt communication doth debauch and SERM CCXIV.
ile the minds of men, and that not only of the
aker, but likewiſe of the hearer of ſuch diſcourſe;
auſe it gratifies and feeds a corrupt humour, and
itiated appetite, beſide that it diſpoſeth and inclines
lewd and filthy actions: a ſmutty tongue and un-
afte deeds are ſeldom far aſunder, and do very
en go together; for filthy talk and lewd practices
m only to differ in the occaſion and opportunity;
d he that makes no conſcience of the one, will
rdly ſtick at the other, when it can be done with
reſy and ſafety. The law of GOD forbids both
ke, and his eye beholds both; "for there is not a
word in my tongue," ſays David, Pſal. cxxxix. 4.
but thou, O LORD! knoweſt it altogether." So
at whatever may deter us from lewd practice (the
thority of GOD forbidding it, or the awe of his
eſence, who continually ſtands by us, and hears
d ſees all that we ſay and do) is of equal force
reſtrain us from lewd and filthy words: for they
th proceed from the ſame ill diſpoſition of mind,
d are done in equal contempt of the divine pre-
nce and authority.

V. It is uncivil and unmannerly, very diſagreeable
d highly diſpleaſing to all ſober and modeſt perſons.
is a clowniſh and rude thing, ſays Tully, de Offic.
b. 1. *ſi rerum turpitudini adhibetur verborum obſcenitas*, if to things which are immodeſt in themſelves, we add the obſcenity of words."

Nothing that treſpaſſes upon the modeſty of the
mpany, and the decency of converſation, can be-
me the mouth of a wiſe and virtuous perſon. This
ind of converſation would fain paſs for wit among
me ſort of perſons, to whom it is acceptable; but
hatever favours of rudeneſs and immodeſty, and ill

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manners, is very far from deſerving that name; and they that are ſober and virtuous, cannot entertain any diſcourſe of this kind with approbation and acceptance: a well-bred perſon will never offend in this way; and therefore it cannot but be eſteemed as an affront to modeſt company, and a rude preſuming upon their approbation, impudently taking it for granted that all others are as lewd and diſſolute as themſelves.

This ſort of converſation was not only offenſive to righteous Lot, but was a perpetual vexation to him, and grieved him at his very heart. So St. Peter tells us, 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8. that "Lot was vexed with the filthy converſation of the wicked. For that righteous man dwelling among them, in ſeeing and hearing, vexed his righteous ſoul from day to day with their unlawful deeds." In ſeeing and hearing, that is, in ſeeing their lewd actions, and hearing their filthy talk, his life became a burden to him; and therefore GOD ſingled him out, and delivered him both from that wicked company, and from that dreadful judgment of fire and brimſtone, which came down from heaven upon them, and conſumed them with an utter deſtruction, for an example to all ages, and an admonition to all good men, that they ought to be in like manner affected, as righteous Lot was, with "the filthy converſation of the wicked."

VI. As by this practice we offend againſt nature, and reaſon, and true morality; ſo it is likewiſe a direct contempt and defiance of the chriſtian religion, which does ſo ſtrictly forbid, and ſo ſeverely condemn it in Chriſtians. Our bleſſed SAVIOUR ſeems more particularly to cenſure and condemn this vice, when he ſays, Matt. xii. 36, 37. "that every idle word that men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give an account thereof

" thereof in the day of judgment. Every idle word, SERM. CCXIV. ῥῆμα ἀργὸν, " every vain and unprofitable word," that no ways tends to edification; that is the very loweſt ſenſe the words can bear. But then how much more ſhall we give an account in that day of every lewd word, which tends to corrupt and debauch the minds and manners of men. Some copies have it, ῥῆμα πονηρὸν, " every naughty and wicked word," every falſe and malicious, and calumniating word: " an idle word," ſays St. Baſil, " is that which is not " for edification, and ſuch words ſhall come under exa- " mination in that great aſſembly of the whole world; " and what then," ſays he, " ſhall be done to words " of ſcurrility and calumny, and obſcenity?"

But that which will beſt direct us to the meaning of this phraſe, is what the jewiſh maſters obſerved, that by " an idle word" the Jews did commonly underſtand immodeſt and unchaſte ſpeech, ſcurrilous and obſcene words. And then it follows, " for by " thy words thou ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy words " thou ſhalt be condemned." Men are commonly apt to make a very light matter of ſuch words; but becauſe they ſhew the mind and manners of the man, his inward temper and diſpoſition, therefore men ſhall be called to a ſtrict account for them in the day of judgment, and be condemned for lewd and diſſolute words as well as for acts of filthineſs and uncleanneſs; becauſe theſe " come from the heart, and defile the " man;" they proceed from an impure ſpring and fountain; and though we only perceive them to come out of the mouth, yet they proceed " out of the abundance " of the heart," from an evil diſpoſition of mind.

So that our judge hath expreſly warned us of this fault, and declared to us the danger of it. And therefore whoſoever believes this declaration of our SA-

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VIOUR, and dreads the judgment of the great day, ought to take heed that he offend not with his tongue in this or any other kind. Men make but little account of ſuch words now, but they ſhall all be ſtrictly accounted for another day; and what we utter now ſo freely and without bluſhing, will then ſtrike us dumb, and be matter of greateſt ſhame and confuſion to us, in the preſence of GOD and his holy angels.

And ſo St. Paul likewiſe, not only here in the text, doth forbid and reprove this practice, when he ſays, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your "mouth: but that which is good to the uſe of edi-"fying, that it may miniſter grace to the hearers;" but in ſeveral other places of his epiſtles, he moſt ſeverely condemns it, as utterly miſbecoming Chriſtians, and moſt directly contrary to our moſt holy profeſſion. Eph. v. 3, 4. "but fornication, and all uncleanneſs, "or covetouſneſs, let it not once be named among "you, as becometh ſaints; neither filthineſs nor fool-"iſh talking, nor jeſting, which are not convenient." Here he forbids all lewd and filthy talk, as utterly miſbecoming the converſation of Chriſtians, who ſhould give no occaſion to have the vices of this nature ſo much as once mentioned, much leſs practiſed amongſt Chriſtians; "let not theſe things," ſays he, "be once named among you, as becometh ſaints: "but rather giving of thanks." Here he directs us to that which is the proper employment of the tongue, and one of the chief ends of ſpeech; which is to praiſe and glorify GOD, and not to diſhonour him by lewd and filthy talk. And this he urgeth again, as the proper "fruit of our lips." Ver. 20. "giving thanks "always for all things unto GOD and the Father, in "the name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST."

And at the 5th ver. of this chapter he appeals to Chriſtians,

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Chriſtians, whether they had not been conſtantly taught and inſtructed, that all lewdneſs and filthineſs, not only in act but in word, will certainly ſhut men out of the kingdom of heaven. "For this," ſays he, "ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean "perſon," (referring to thoſe ſeveral ſorts of uncleanneſs he had mentioned before; among which is "filthy and fooliſh talk.") "hath any inheritance in "the kingdom of CHRIST, and of GOD." The apoſtle here ſpeaks to the gentile Chriſtians, who were newly converted from heatheniſm, and had been accuſtomed to make ſlight of theſe kinds of ſin, which were ſo common among the idolatrous heathen, and part of the worſhip of their obſcene deities: but he tells them, that the chriſtian religion, which they had embraced, required another ſort of converſation, and did ſtrictly enjoin all manner of purity, both of heart and life, in all our words and actions; and that "as "he that hath called us is holy, ſo we ſhould be holy "in all manner of converſation." And whatever falſe teachers might inſinuate, as if the chriſtian religion did allow a greater liberty in theſe things, and made that "a cloak for licentiouſneſs, hereby turning "the grace of GOD," that is, the doctrine of the goſpel, "into laſciviouſneſs," as St. Jude ſpeaks, ver. 4. yet they would certainly find things quite otherwiſe in the iſſue, and that GOD, who puniſhed the heathen for theſe vices, and ſent ſuch terrible judgments upon them, would much leſs let Chriſtians go unpuniſhed, that ſhould be found guilty of them, Eph. v. 6. "let no man deceive you with vain "words: for becauſe of theſe things cometh the "wrath of GOD upon the children of diſobedience," that is, the heathen world, who continued ſtill in their infidelity, and lived in the practice of thoſe ſins; and

would

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would fall much more heavily upon Chriſtians, if after they had embraced this holy religion, they ſhould allow themſelves in any of thoſe vile and impure practices, which they had been guilty of before, and which they had ſo ſolemnly promiſed to renounce and put off in their baptiſm.

And ſo likewiſe, Col. iii. 5, 6, 7. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanneſs, inordinate affection, evil concupiſcence, and covetouſneſs, which is idolatry: for which things ſake the wrath of God cometh on the children of diſobedience," or unbelief; in the which ye alſo walked ſome time, when ye lived in them," that is, whilſt ye were heathens, and converſed among them, ye practiced theſe vices: "but now," that is, now that you are become Chriſtians, "put off theſe, anger, wrath, malice, evil-ſpeaking, filthy communication." Ye ſee that filthy communication is reckoned amongſt thoſe ſins of the Gentiles, which Chriſtians were utterly to quit and forſake, as contrary to the purity of the chriſtian profeſſion. And ſo St. Paul tells the Theſſalonians, 1 Theſſ. iv. 7. "God hath not called us unto uncleanneſs; but unto holineſs." And he gives the ſame precept to the Coloſſians, chap. iv. 6. "let your ſpeech be always with grace," that is, acceptable and uſeful, ſomething that is worthy the hearing; "ſeaſoned with ſalt," that is, with prudence and diſcretion, which ſhould always govern our ſpeech, and keep it within the bounds of ſobriety and modeſty. As our talk ſhould not be inſipid and fooliſh, ſo much leſs rotten and unſavoury, immodeſt and lewd.

And in his epiſtle to the Philippians, chap. iv. 8. he earneſtly recommends the virtues that are directly contrary to this vice. "Finally, my brethren, whatſoever

" ſoever things are honeſt, ὅσα σεμνὰ, whatſoever " things are grave or venerable, ὅσα ἁγνὰ, whatſoever " things are pure or chaſte, think on theſe things;" that is, have great regard to them in your converſation and behaviour, there being no ſort of virtue which the chriſtian religion does not ſtrictly enjoin and exact from us; and conſequently whatſoever is light and frothy, and much more whatever is lewd and filthy, ought to be baniſhed from the converſation of Chriſtians, as utterly inconſiſtent with the gravity and purity of that holy profeſſion.

And the ſame apoſtle tells us, that all the promiſes of the goſpel are ſo many arguments and obligations to purity and holineſs. 2 Cor. vii. 1. " Having there- " fore theſe promiſes (dearly beloved) let us cleanſe " ourſelves from all filthineſs of the fleſh and ſpirit, " perfecting," or practiſing, " holineſs in the fear of " God." And on the contrary St. John tells us, that all impurity will be an effectual bar to our entrance into heaven. Rev. xxi. 27. ſpeaking of the new Jeruſalem, ſays he, " there ſhall in no wiſe en- " ter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatſo- " ever worketh abomination." So that if either the promiſes or threatnings of the goſpel have any influence upon us, they will effectually reſtrain this vicious practice.

VII. and laſtly, all impure and filty communication " grieves the holy ſpirit," and drives him away from us. And therefore after he had forbidden this vice here in the text, that " no corrupt communica- " tion proceed out of your mouth, but that which is " good to the uſe of edifying, that it may miniſter " grace unto the hearers;" he immediately adds, " and grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby " ye are ſealed to the day of redemption;" hereby intimating,

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intimating, that all corrupt and filthy communication "grieves the holy Spirit of GOD," that bleſſed Spirit which is "the ſeal and earneſt of our redemption," that is, as the apoſtle himſelf explains it, of "the redemption "of our bodies from the bondage of corruption," by the reſurrection of them to eternal life. For it is the Spirit of GOD dwelling in us, which ſhall raiſe our bodies at the laſt day, and make them partakers of a bleſſed immortality. So the apoſtle ſays expreſly, Rom. viii. 11. "But if the Spirit of him that raiſed up JESUS "from the dead dwell in you; he that raiſed up "CHRIST from the dead, ſhall alſo quicken your "mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." If we defile our bodies, or any members of them by uncleanneſs, we grieve the Spirit of GOD which dwells in us, and force him out of his habitation; that bleſſed Spirit, which ſhould quicken our mortal bodies, and is both the earneſt and the cauſe of their reſurrection to eternal life. For our bodies as well as our ſouls are "the temples of the holy Ghoſt," and "the Spirit of GOD dwells in them;" and we baniſh him out of his temple, whenever we profane it by lewd and filthy ſpeech.

And the apoſtle uſeth this argument more than once to deter Chriſtians more eſpecially from the ſins of uncleanneſs. 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. "Know ye not that ye "are the temple of GOD, and that the Spirit of GOD "dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of "GOD, him ſhall GOD deſtroy. For the temple of "GOD is holy, which temple ye are." The holy Spirit of GOD ſanctifieth the place where he more eſpecially reſides, and makes it his temple; and ſo are our bodies as well as our ſouls; as the ſame apoſtle expreſly tells us, chap. vi. ver. 18, 19, 20. where he argues againſt the ſins of uncleanneſs, which are committed

mitted in the body, and by the members and inſtruments of it, from this conſideration, that "our bodies "are the temples of the holy Ghoſt. Flee fornica-"tion," ſays he. "Every ſin a man doth, is with-"out the body: but he that committeth forni-"cation, ſinneth againſt his own body;" that is, the body is not the immediate inſtrument of other ſins, as it is of thoſe of uncleanneſs; and then it follows, "what, know ye not that your body is the temple "of the holy Ghoſt which is in you, which ye have of "GOD, and ye are not your own? for ye are bought "with a price: therefore glorify GOD in your body, "and in your ſpirit, which are GOD's." Under the name of fornication the apoſtle comprehends all the ſins of uncleanneſs, of which any member of the body is an inſtrument; ſo that the laſciviouſneſs of the eye, or ear, or tongue, is a polluting or profaning this temple of GOD, and drives the holy Spirit of GOD out of his poſſeſſion.

And whenever the Spirit of GOD departs from us, we ceaſe to be the children of GOD, and forfeit the earneſt of our eternal inheritance. "Now if any man "have not the Spirit of CHRIST," ſays the ſame apoſtle, Rom. viii. 9. "he is none of his;" that is, he does not belong to him; in plain engliſh, he is no Chriſtian. So that as we would not forfeit the title of Chriſtians, and the bleſſed hope of a glorious reſurrection, we muſt be very careful that "no corrupt communication proceed out of our mouth," leſt hereby "we grieve the holy ſpirit of GOD, by "which we are ſealed unto the day of redemption."

I have now done with this argument, and what I have ſaid concerning immodeſt and unchaſte words, is of equal force againſt laſcivious books, and pictures, and plays; all which do alike intrench upon natural modeſty,

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modeſty, and for that reaſon are equally forbidden and condemned by the chriſtian religion; and therefore it may ſuffice to have named them. I ſhall only ſpeak a few words concerning plays, which as they are now ordered among us, are a mighty reproach to the age and nation.

To ſpeak againſt them in general, may be thought too ſevere, and that which the preſent age cannot ſo well brook, and would not perhaps be ſo juſt and reaſonable; becauſe it is very poſſible, they might be ſo framed and governed by ſuch rules, as not only to be innocently diverting, but inſtructing and uſeful, to put ſome vices and follies out of countenance, which cannot perhaps be ſo decently reproved, nor ſo effectually expoſed and corrected any other way. But as the ſtage now is, they are intolerable, and not fit to be permitted in a civilized, much leſs in a chriſtian nation. They do moſt notoriouſly miniſter both to infidelity and vice. By the profaneneſs of them, they are apt to inſtil bad principles into the minds of men, and to leſſen the awe and reverence which all men ought to have for GOD and religion; and by their lewdneſs they teach vice, and are apt to infect the minds of men, and diſpoſe them to lewd and diſſolute practices.

And therefore I do not ſee how any perſon pretending to ſobriety and virtue, and eſpecially to the pure and holy religion of our bleſſed SAVIOUR, can without great guilt, and open contradiction to his holy profeſſion, be preſent at ſuch lewd and immodeſt plays, much leſs frequent them, as too many do, who yet would take it very ill to be ſhut out of the communion of Chriſtians, as they would moſt certainly have been in the firſt and pureſt ages of chriſtianity.

To conclude this whole diſcourſe, let us always remember,

member, that gravity and modeſty in all our beha- SERM. CCXIV.
viour and converſation, in all our words and actions, are duties indiſpenſably required by the chriſtian religion, and the great fences of piety and virtue; and therefore ought with great conſcience and care to be preſerved and kept inviolable: and when theſe fences are once broken down, there is a wide gap made for almoſt any ſin and vice to enter in. Immodeſt words do naturally tend to corrupt good manners, both in ourſelves and others.

There is none of us, but would reckon it very great infelicity to be deprived of that noble and uſeful faculty of ſpeech, which is ſo peculiar to man, and which, next to our reaſon and underſtanding, doth moſt remarkably diſtinguiſh us from the brute beaſts: but it is a much greater unhappineſs to have this faculty, and to abuſe it to vile and lewd purpoſes. The firſt may be only our misfortune: but this can never be without great fault, and groſs neglect of ourſelves, and much better had it been for us to have been born dumb, than thus to turn our glory into ſhame and guilt, by perverting this excellent gift of GOD, to the corrupting ourſelves and others.

This I hope may be ſufficient to reſtrain men from this vice, which I have all this while been ſpeaking againſt; at leaſt to preſerve thoſe which are not yet infected, from the contagion of it; and I hope to reclaim many from ſo bad a practice. And if any be ſo hardened in their lewd courſe, that no counſel of this kind can make impreſſion on them, what remains, but to conclude in the words of the angel to St. John, Revel. xxii. 11. "he that is filthy let him "be filthy ſtill: and he that is holy, let him be "holy ſtill."

SER-

SERMON CCXV.

The true remedy againſt the troubles of life.

JOHN xiv. 1.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in GOD; *believe alſo in me.*

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IN which words our bleſſed SAVIOUR does, upon a particular occaſion, preſcribe an univerſal remedy againſt trouble. And the particular occaſion of this conſolatory diſcourſe, which our SAVIOUR here makes to his diſciples, was this; he had often told them of his ſufferings; but the conceit which they had entertained of his temporal reign, would not ſuffer them to admit any thought of ſuch a thing, as the ſufferings or death of the Meſſias; and therefore it is ſaid that theſe things did not ſink into them, and that they underſtood them not; men being generally very ſlow to underſtand what they do not like, and have no mind to. At laſt our SAVIOUR tells them plainly, that how backward ſoever they were to believe it, the time of his ſufferings and death was now approaching, and that he ſhould ſhortly be "betray-"ed into the hands of men," and be "crucified and "ſlain." At this his diſciples were ſtruck with great fear, and exceedingly troubled, but in contemplation of his ſufferings, and of their own invaluable loſs. To comfort them upon this occaſion, our SAVIOUR directs his diſciples to that courſe, which was not only proper in their preſent caſe, but is an univerſal

verſal antidote and remedy againſt all trouble whatſoever, and will not only ſerve to mitigate our trouble, and ſupport our ſpirits under the fear and apprehenſion of future evils, but under preſent afflictions and ſufferings; and to quiet and comfort our minds under the ſaddeſt condition, and foreſt calamities that can befal us. "Let not your heart be troubled: "ye believe in GOD, believe alſo in me."

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He does not only forbid them to be troubled, and counſel them againſt it; ſuch advice is eaſily given, but not ſo eaſily to be followed: but he preſcribes the proper remedy againſt trouble, which is, truſt and confidence in GOD the great creator and wiſe governor of the world; and likewiſe in himſelf, the bleſſed Son of GOD, and SAVIOUR of mankind. "Ye be-"lieve in GOD, believe alſo in me."

The words are variouſly tranſlated; by ſome indicatively, "ye do believe in GOD, and ye do be-"lieve in me," therefore "be not troubled;" by others imperatively, "believe in GOD, and believe "likewiſe in me;" and then you can have no cauſe of trouble. Or elſe the firſt clauſe may be rendred indicatively, and the latter imperatively; and ſo our tranſlation renders the words, "Ye do believe in GOD, "believe alſo in me;" as "you believe in GOD" the creator and governor of the world, ſo "believe "alſo in me" the Son of GOD, and the SAVIOUR of the world. But which way ſoever the words be rendered, the ſenſe comes all to one; that faith in GOD, and in our bleſſed SAVIOUR, are here preſcribed as the proper and moſt powerful remedies againſt trouble. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe "in GOD; believe alſo in me."

In the handling of theſe words I ſhall do theſe two things.

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Firſt, I ſhall conſider what ſort of trouble is here forbidden, or with what reaſonable limitations this general prohibition of our SAVIOUR is to be underſtood, "let not your heart be troubled."

Secondly, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew what virtue and force there is in the remedy here preſcribed by our SAVIOUR, to mitigate and allay our trouble, and to ſupport and quiet our minds under it.

Firſt, we will conſider what ſort of trouble is here forbidden, and with what due and reaſonable limitations we are to underſtand this general prohibition of our SAVIOUR to his diſciples, "let not your hearts "be troubled." And this we ſhall beſt find out by conſidering the various objects of trouble, together with the ſeveral cauſes or grounds of them. And theſe may all be ranged under theſe three heads; evils paſt, preſent, or to come. For the ground of all trouble is ſome evil, either really and in itſelf ſo, or what is apprehended by us under that notion: and the ſeveral kinds of trouble, are either the reflection upon evils paſt, or the ſenſe of an evil that is preſent, or the fear and apprehenſion of ſome future evil which threatens us and hangs over us.

1. For the firſt, the trouble cauſed by reflection upon evils paſt, this muſt either be the evil of affliction or ſin. The former of theſe, when it is paſt, is ſeldom any cauſe of trouble, the remembrance of paſt ſufferings, and the evils which we get over, being rather delightful than grievous; ſo that it is only the evil of ſin, the reflection whereof is troubleſom. And this is that which we call guilt, which is an inward vexation, and diſcontent, and grief of mind, ariſing from the conſciouſneſs that we have done amiſs, and a fearful apprehenſion of ſome vengeance and puniſhment that will follow it; and there is no trouble that

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is comparable to this, when the conſcience of a ſinner is thoroughly awakened. SERM. CCXV.

Now upon this account our hearts ought to be troubled, and we can hardly exceed in it, provided our trouble do not drive us to deſpair, but to repentance: but there can be no ſuſpicion that this comes within the compaſs of our SAVIOUR's prohibition.

II. As for the troubles cauſed by the ſenſe of the preſent evils, either of loſs or ſuffering, though this do properly enough fall within the compaſs of our SAVIOUR's prohibition, "let not your heart be "troubled," yet it admits of ſeveral limitations; therefore in order to the fixing of it's due and proper bounds, I ſhall briefly ſhew, what trouble for preſent evils and afflictions which are upon us, is not forbidden, and what is.

1. We are not here forbidden to have a juſt and due ſenſe of any evil or calamity that is upon us; becauſe this is natural, and we cannot help it: for there is a real difference of things in themſelves; ſome things are in their nature good and convenient for us, and agreeable and delightful to our ſenſes; and other things are in themſelves evil, that is, naturally diſpleaſing and grievous; and we muſt not only be ſtoicks, but even ſtocks and ſtones, if we have not a juſt ſenſe and reſentment of this difference. Our bleſſed SAVIOUR had ſo; and as he was afflicted more than any man, and ſuffer'd more than any of the ſons of men, ſo was he likewiſe very ſenſible of his ſufferings, and had a natural dread and horror of them; inſomuch that he himſelf tells us, that "his ſoul was "exceeding ſorrowful, even to death," upon the apprehenſion of what he was to undergo; which made him pray ſo earneſtly, and to repeat that petition ſo often, "Father, if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs

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" from me." Nay, the very anguiſh of his mind, cauſed by the dread and horror of his ſufferings, was ſo great as to force his blood through the pores of his body, ſo that " he ſweat as it were thick drops " of blood falling upon the ground."

And this is not to be wondered at, becauſe our bleſſed SAVIOUR, as he had the greateſt endowments of human nature in their greateſt perfection, ſo he had a perfect ſenſe of the evils, and pains, and ſufferings of it. And all philoſophy that will not acknowledge loſs, and pain, and ſuffering to be evils and troubleſom and terrible, is either obſtinate ſullenneſs or groſs hypocriſy.

2. Nor doth this prohibition of our SAVIOUR exclude natural affection. This is a plant which GOD himſelf hath planted in human nature, and that for very excellent ends and purpoſes; and having made us men, and endowed us with ſuch paſſions, he does not expect that we ſhould put off our nature, and transform ourſelves into another ſort of creatures than what we were when we came out of his own hands. To " be without natural affection," and to have no afflictive ſenſe of the loſs of neareſt relations, is condemned in ſcripture, as a mark of the greateſt degeneracy and depravation of human nature. And therefore we cannot imagine that our SAVIOUR did intend to forbid ſuch a moderate and well regulated degree of trouble upon theſe occaſions, as is the proper and genuine iſſue of thoſe natural affections, which GOD himſelf hath implanted in us.

3. When our SAVIOUR forbids us to be troubled, he doth not forbid us to have a juſt ſenſe of GOD's judgments, or of his hand, in procuring or permitting the evils which befal us; much leſs of our own ſins, which are the meritorious cauſe of them: nay,

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he contrary, he expects that we ſhould acknow- SERM. CCXV.
e his providence, and the juſtneſs of it, in his ſe-
ſt dealings with us; that we ſhould be "hum-
ed under his mighty hand, and turn to him that
ıites us, and bear the indignation of the LORD
ıtiently, becauſe we have ſinned againſt him."
atever is a ſign of GOD's diſpleaſure againſt us,
juſt and reaſonable cauſe of trouble to us.

ut when our SAVIOUR here forbids us to be trou-
l, he plainly intends to prohibit theſe three things.

. Immoderate grief and ſorrow for any preſent
ction or loſs, without any reſtraint upon ourſelves,
s to let grief looſe, and to give full ſcope to it, to
he reins fall out of our hands, ſo that the conſidera-
ıs of reaſon and religion have no manner of power
command over us; to ſorrow, as Rachel did for
children, "refuſing to be comforted." This is un-
ſonable, and uſually of pernicious conſequence: for
man knows, when he once abandons himſelf to
lancholy, and gives way to grief, and lets it pierce
heart, and enter into his ſoul, how it may over-
elm his ſpirit, and ſink it paſt recovery. And to
ı pitch the trouble of ſome men for worldly loſſes
l diſappointments, becauſe it was not reſtrained and
erned at firſt, hath brought them; and it often
ıpens, as St. Paul hath obſerved, that "the trou-
ıle of the world worketh death."

I think hardly any man did ever die of grief for his
ı, and killed himſelf by laying them to heart. It
vell if our ſorrow for ſin proceed to that degree,
to work real repentance and amendment. And
reaſon why our ſorrow for ſin is commonly mo-
ate and within bounds, is becauſe the ſorrow and
uble of repentance is always reaſonable, and reaſon
ıps our grief within bounds: but "the ſorrow of

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"the world," that is, of covetous and worldly-minded men, who have unreaſonably ſet their affections upon this world, hath nothing to ſet bounds and give limits to it. and therefore by the juſt judgment of GOD, it ſometimes proceeds ſo far as "to "work death." Many men's hearts have been broken for the loſs of an eſtate, or ſome great croſs and diſappointment in their worldly affairs and deſigns. Thus Nabal, upon the very apprehenſion of the danger that he and his eſtate were in, and had ſo narrowly eſcaped, was ſtruck with grief to the degree of ſtupidity, ſo that "his heart died within him, and he "became as a ſtone;" and in a few days he died of that grief.

2. We are not to be troubled for preſent afflictions and ſufferings to the degree of impatience and diſcontent, ſo as to fret and murmur in our hearts againſt GOD, and "to charge him fooliſhly," as if he dealt hardly with us, and had not a due regard for us, and an equal conſideration of our caſe. For we are all ſinners, and always deſerve to ſuffer, and therefore whatever temporal evils befal the beſt men in this world, they are always "leſs than their iniquities have "deſerved:" and yet men are very prone to cenſure and find fault with GOD, for the evils and calamities which they draw down upon themſelves. So Solomon obſerves, Prov. xix. 3. "the fooliſhneſs of man "perverteth his way; and his heart fretteth againſt "the LORD." We ſuffer for our own ſins and follies, and then are angry with GOD becauſe we ſuffer. GOD is angry with us for our ſins, and when he is angry with us, and "lifts up his hand againſt us," it becomes us "to humble ourſelves under his mighty "hand;" for "who can ſtand before him when once "he is angry?" But we have no cauſe to fret againſt him,

, for the evils which we bring upon ourſelves: SERM. CCXV.
des that fretting is not the way to relieve and eaſe, but to vex and gall us the more.

. As to the fear and apprehenſion of future evils, igh we ought to have a juſt ſenſe of them, yet ought not to be dejected and troubled for them to degree of deſpondency, ſo as to conclude ourſelves erable and forſaken, utterly loſt and undone, and t our caſe is paſt all help and remedy: we ſhould be ſo dejected, as if we were deſtitute of all com-, and utterly without hope. Hope lies at the bot-1 of the worſt condition; for while we are not vithout GOD," we can never be "without hope;" ong as the government of the world is in ſo good ids, our caſe can never be deſperate; and therefore ought to rebuke the deſpondency of our ſpirits, David did, Pſal. xliii. 5. "why art thou ſo caſt lown, O my ſoul? and why art thou diſquieted vithin me? hope in GOD." And we ſhould ſup-t ourſelves in the greateſt dangers and fears, as he , Pſal. iii. 1, 2, 3. "LORD, how are they increaſ-:d that trouble me? How many are they that riſe ıp againſt me? Many there be which ſay of my oul, there is no help for him in GOD. But thou, O LORD, art a ſhield for me, my glory, and the ifter up of my head."

And this cauſe of trouble upon the fear and appre-ıfion of future evils, was the caſe of the diſciples, ıo were mightily dejected and diſturbed, upon the prehenſion of the deſtitute condition they ſhould be upon our SAVIOUR's departure from them; that :y ſhould be expoſed to a malicious world, without manner of protection from thoſe innumerable e-ls and dangers which threatned them. And this I all have moſt particular reſpect to in my following

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diſcourſe, as being more particularly intended by our SAVIOUR, and being one of the moſt common cauſes of trouble in this world. I proceed therefore in the

Second place to conſider, what force there is in the remedy here preſcribed by our SAVIOUR, to mitigate and allay our troubles, both in reſpect of our preſent evils and ſufferings, and the danger and apprehenſion of future evils, and to ſupport and comfort our minds under them. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye "believe in GOD; believe alſo in me."

In which words our SAVIOUR preſcribes a double remedy againſt trouble.

Firſt, faith in GOD, the great creator and wiſe governor of the world. "Ye believe in GOD," or, believe ye in GOD, to which he adds, in the

Second place, faith likewiſe in himſelf, the Son of GOD, and the SAVIOUR of men. "Ye believe in "GOD; believe alſo in me." Not as if faith in GOD were not a ſufficient ground of conſolation and ſupport to our minds; but to acquaint us, that a firm faith in him who is the Son of GOD, and SAVIOUR of the world, would very much tend to confirm and ſtrengthen our truſt and confidence in GOD; as will clearly appear, when I come to ſhew, what peculiar conſiderations of comfort and ſupport the chriſtian religion offers to us, beyond what the common light and reaſon of mankind, from the conſideration of the divine nature and perfections, does ſuggeſt to us. And to explain the full ſtrength and force of theſe two conſiderations, I ſhall do theſe two things.

Firſt, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, what conſiderations of comfort and ſupport, the belief of a GOD, and the natural notions and acknowledgments of mankind concerning him, do afford to good men for the allaying and mitigating of their fears and troubles. And,

Secondly,

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econdly, what farther conſiderations faith in RIST, and the firm belief of the chriſtian religion, afford to this purpoſe. "Ye believe in GOD; elive alſo in me."

Firſt, to ſhew, what conſiderations of comfort and port, the belief of a GOD, and the natural noti- and acknowledgments of mankind concerning n, do afford to good men for the allaying and mi- ating of their fears and troubles; which I ſhall efly deduce thus:

The firm belief and perſuaſion of a GOD does ne- ſarily infer the belief of his infinite power, and wiſ- m, and holineſs, and goodneſs; for theſe are ne- ſary and eſſential perfections of the divine nature, thout which we cannot conceive ſuch a being as GOD

Now from theſe eſſential perfections of the divine ture, theſe two principles do naturally reſult.

I. That his providence governs the world, and ad- iniſters the affairs of it, particularly of mankind, ith great goodneſs and wiſdom.

II. That his providence is more peculiarly con- rned for good men, and that he hath a very tender d peculiar care of them, and regard to them.

Now theſe two principles, concerning which I have iſcourſed at large upon another occaſion *, afford us is fourfold ground of comfort, under all the evils at we labour under and are afraid of.

I. If GOD govern the world, then we and all our tereſts and concernments are certainly in the beſt and feſt hands; and where, if we knew how to wiſh well nd wiſely for ourſelves, we ſhould deſire to have hem; and therefore why ſhould our heart be trou- led at any thing that doth or can befal us? †

* See vol. VIII. ſerm. CXXXVII.

† See this matter alſo handled at large in the ſame ſermon.

II. Ano-

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II. Another ground of comfort is, that if the providence of GOD have a particular regard to good men, and favour for them, then we may be aſſured, that if we be careful of our duty to GOD, and rely upon his goodneſs, and refer ourſelves to his pleaſure, in the final iſſue and reſult of things, all ſhall turn to our good, and conſpire in our happineſs: nay, if we make the beſt uſe of the evils and afflictions which befal us, and bear them as we ought, we ourſelves may do a great deal to turn them to our benefit and advantage; to the bettering of our minds, and the improvement of our virtues, and the increaſe of our reward. And why ſhould we be troubled ſo much at things which may prove ſo many ways beneficial to us, if it be not our own fault? which tend to our good, and will end in it, if we will but "let patience "have it's perfect work," as St. James ſhews, chap. v. 11. in the inſtance of Job, whoſe admirable patience had a glorious end and reward, even in this world; "you have heard," ſays he, "of the patience "of Job, and of the end GOD made with him; that "the LORD is very pitiful and of tender mercy." Job upon a dunghil, is no whit inferior to the moſt glorious prince that ever ſat upon a throne. Some men have been more illuſtrious, and according to the true rate and value of things, more conſiderable for their patience, and courage, and conſtancy of mind in great afflictions and ſufferings, than the greateſt pomp and proſperity of the world could poſſibly have made them. Some have borne poverty, and ſickneſs, and reproach, and perſecution, and exquiſite pain and torments, with ſo much decency, with ſuch greatneſs of mind, and firmneſs of reſolution, as might juſtly provoke the envy of the greateſt and wealthieſt, and to all outward appearance the happieſt perſons

that

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at ever were in the world. M. Antoninus was an ellent good man, and perhaps the greateſt empe- that ever was, for in his time the Roman empire as at it's greateſt extent; and yet it is hard to ſay, hether Epictetus, whoſe example I propoſed before, nd who lived about the ſame time with this great nd good emperor, I ſay, it is not eaſy to ſay, whe- er this poor man Epictetus, who was depreſt into e loweſt and moſt afflicted condition, that human ature is almoſt capable of, were not, by reaſon of oſe admirable virtues which ſhined ſo brightly in at dark and diſmal condition, his invincible pati- nce, his perfect ſubmiſſion to the providence of God, he perpetual chearfulneſs and ſerenity, the unmove- ble conſtancy and equality of his mind, according o a right eſtimation of things, the greater and more lorious perſon of the two.

So that good men are always ſecure, as to the main nd the eſſentials of happineſs; under all outward flictions and ſufferings of the body, they may ſtill etain a wiſe and virtuous mind, which is "that good 'part which cannot be taken from them;" and if hey retain that, they are ſure of the favour of God, nd the countenance of heaven, which alone is ſuffi- ient to make any condition happy.

III. Another ground of comfort is, that if God overn the world, he can either prevent and divert he greateſt evils that threaten us, or if they come up- n us, he can ſupport us under them, and deliver us ut of them: and if we be good, and it be for our ood, he will do one of theſe for us; either he will revent the evil, that it ſhall not come, if that be beſt or us; or if affliction fall heavy upon us, he will ſup- ort us under it; and if our ſtrength be increaſed in roportion to the weight of our burden, it is as well

as

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as if we had eſcaped it, nay perhaps much better, conſidering the benefit and the reward of it. But how grievous ſoever it be, he can, when he pleaſeth, deliver us from it; and he will do it preſently if it be for our good; and if it be not, it is not really deſirable to us to be ſo ſoon freed from it.

IV. and laſtly, which is conſequent upon the former particulars, it is certain upon the whole matter, and upon the ballancing of all accounts, that in every condition good men have much more cauſe of comfort and joy, than of dejection and trouble. Let our fears be as great, and our preſent ſufferings as heavy as they can, there are conſiderations of ſo great moment to be put into the other ſcale, as will infinitely outweigh them, and make them ſeem light. The conſideration of our immortal duration in a future ſtate, and of the endleſs and unſpeakable happineſs of another world, are of that ſolidity and weight, that "theſe light afflictions," as the apoſtle calls them, "which are but for a moment, are no ways worthy "to be compared with them."

What though our paſſage through this world be never ſo ſtormy and tempeſtuous, we ſhall at laſt arrive at a ſafe port. Heaven is a ſure ſanctuary and retreat from all the evils and afflictions which we are liable to, and which many times purſue us ſo cloſe in this mortal ſtate. It is but exerciſing our faith and patience for a very little while, and all will be well with us; much better than if we had never been afflicted, and had been wholly exempted from all ſorts of ſufferings in this world. We have no pretence to "the crown "of life," if we do not "overcome;" and there can be no conqueſt, without ſome conflict.

But becauſe the chriſtian religion does give us the greateſt, if not the only firm aſſurance of the happineſs

of another life, which when all is done, is the
it ſupport and cordial of our fainting ſpirits, under
troubles and afflictions of this life, therefore I
l not now enlarge farther upon it, but refer it to
ſecond head of my diſcourſe, which I propoſed to
ak to in the next place, viz. what farther conſide-
ons of comfort and ſupport, faith in CHRIST, and
firm belief of the chriſtian religion do afford to
od men, for the allaying and mitigating of their
rs and troubles. "Let not your heart be trou-
bled: ye believe in GOD; believe alſo in me."
t this I ſhall refer to ſome other opportunity.

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he true remedy againſt the troubles of life.

JOHN xiv. 1.

t not your heart be troubled: ye believe in GOD; *believe alſo in me.*

HAVE conſidered theſe words as an univerſal remedy againſt trouble: and in ſhewing what vir- and force there is in this remedy, I have conſidered, First, that faith in GOD is a proper and moſt pow- ful means to mitigate and allay our trouble, and to pport and quiet our minds under it.

SERM. CCXVI. The ſecond ſermon on this text.

I now proceed in the ſecond place to ſhew what rther conſiderations of comfort and ſupport, faith CHRIST, and the firm belief of the chriſtian reli- on, do afford good men, for the allaying and miti- ting of their great fears and troubles. "Let not

"your

SERM. CCXV. "your heart be troubled; ye believe in GOD, believe alſo in me." I ſhall mention theſe five.

I. Faith in CHRIST, or the belief of the chriſtian religion, gives us full and perfect aſſurance of immortality, and of the glorious and eternal rewards of another world.

II. It promiſeth to every ſincere Chriſtian the inward aſſiſtance, and ſupport, and comfort of GOD's holy Spirit, to bear up the weakneſs of human nature, under it's heavieſt preſſures, of fear, or grief, or pain.

III. It aſſures us of the ſpecial efficacy of our prayers with GOD, either for our deliverance from trouble, or for the aids and ſupports of his grace under it.

IV. It propounds to us the beſt and moſt admirable pattern that ever was, of patience and conſtancy of mind under the apprehenſion of approaching evils, or the ſenſe of preſent ſufferings: and of a contented and chearful ſubmiſſion to the will of GOD, in the ſaddeſt condition to which human nature is incident.

V. It aſſures us of a moſt compaſſionate, and prevalent, and perpetual patron, and advocate, and interceſſor with GOD for us.

I. Faith in CHRIST, or the doctrine of the chriſtian religion, gives us full and perfect aſſurance of immortality, and of the glorious and eternal rewards of another world. Of this the world was very doubtful and uncertain before, and had but obſcure and wavering apprehenſions about it. And though the generality of mankind had naturally ſome glimmering apprehenſions of another life after this, and ſecret hopes and expectations of a future reward for good men that were hardly uſed in this world; yet the philoſophers had wrangled and diſputed the matter into ſo much uncertainty, that mankind was very much ſtaggered about it, and the doubts and difficulties that

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at were raiſed about it did very much break the rce and weaken the influence of ſo great and weigh- a conſideration.

Thus it was among the Gentiles. And under the aw of Moſes, though the Jews had ſuch apprehenſi- ns of their own immortality, and of a future ſtate of ewards and puniſhments, as natural light ſuggeſted o them; yet that covenant and diſpenſation added but very little to the clearing of theſe notions, and the ſtrengthening of this perſuaſion in the minds of men; it did rather ſuppoſe it, than add any new ſtrength and force to it: for under that diſpenſation the eyes of men were generally fixt upon temporal promiſes and threatnings: though as the times of the Meſſias grew nearer, and the ſufferings of that people harper, they began to have clearer apprehenſions of a reſurrection to another and better life; it being natural to men, when they are deſtitute of preſent comfort, to cheriſh and make much of the future hopes of a better condition.

And therefore we find that the people of the Jews, when they had been long exerciſed with great afflic- ions, began to comfort and ſupport themſelves with the hopes of a bleſſed reſurrection to a better life; as is evident from the hiſtory of the ſeven brethren in the Maccabees, who with great patience and courage bore up under the moſt exquiſite torments, in confi- dence of being raiſed again to a bleſſed ſtate in ano- ther world. And of theſe it is that the apoſtle cer- tainly ſpeaks, Heb. xi. 35. when he ſays "that ſome "were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they "might obtain a better reſurrection."

But the apoſtle tells us expreſly, 2 Tim. i. 10. that the clear and certain diſcovery of a future ſtate is ow- ing to the chriſtian religion, and "made manifeſt by "the

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" the appearing of our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST; " who hath aboliſhed death, and brought life and " immortality to light by the goſpel." Not only natural light, but all the revelations which GOD had made to the world before, had this weakneſs and imperfection in them, that they did not give men the clear diſcovery and full aſſurance of another life; and conſequently had but little efficacy in compariſon to engage men to their duty, or to ſupport and comfort them under ſufferings: and therefore the apoſtle to the Hebrews calls the goſpel, in oppoſition to the law, " the power of an endleſs life," Heb. vii. 16. intimating to us, how great a force and influence the clear apprehenſions of another life are apt to have upon the minds of men. For which reaſon the ſame apoſtle tells us, ver. 18, 19. that the law was too weak to raiſe men to the perfection of virtue and goodneſs, becauſe it did not work ſtrongly enough upon the hopes of men, by the greatneſs and clearneſs of it's promiſes; and that for this weakneſs it was removed, and a more powerful and awakening diſpenſation brought in the place of it: " for verily," ſays he, " there is an annulling " of the commandment going before," meaning the law of Moſes, which by the goſpel was abrogated and made void, " for the weakneſs and unprofitableneſs of " it; for the law made nothing perfect, but the bring- " ing in of a better hope did." For which reaſon, chap. viii. 6. he calls the covenant of the goſpel " a better " covenant," becauſe " it was eſtabliſhed upon better " promiſes," viz. " the promiſe of an eternal inhe- " ritance," as the ſame apoſtle ſpeaks, chap. ix. 15. All the expreſs promiſes of the law were only of temporal good things, but the promiſes of the goſpel are of eternal life and happineſs: " this is the promiſe " which he hath promiſed us, even eternal life," ſays St. John, 1 John ii. 25. Now

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Now the firm perſuaſion of another life does not
ly anſwer that great difficulty and objection a-
inſt the providence of God, from the ſeeming in-
ſtice and inequality of his dealings with good and
d men in this world, becauſe the eternal rewards
d puniſhments of another world will ſet all things
aight, and make abundant amends to good men
r all their ſufferings and afflictions here; and will
nder the paſt proſperity of bad men one of the great-
t aggravations of their miſery: as it is ſaid of Ba-
lon, Rev. xviii. 7. "how much ſhe hath glorified
herſelf and lived deliciouſly, ſo much torment and
ſorrow give her." In like manner God will deal
ith wicked men in another world; their torments
all riſe in proportion to the pleaſure and proſperity
ey have enjoyed and abuſed in this world. This
markable change of condition which ſhall befal good
id bad men in another world; is ſet forth to us in a
ry lively and affecting manner in the parable of the
ch man and Lazarus, Luke xvi. 25. where Abra-
m is repreſented ſpeaking thus to the rich man,
Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedſt
thy good things, and likewiſe Lazarus evil things:
but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.
He is comforted" in proportion to his ſufferings
this world; and "thou art tormented" in pro-
rtion to the ſenſual pleaſures and luxuries of thy
rmer life. Men under great want and ſufferings
e apt to think their lot in this world very hard;
id yet upon the whole matter, and taking all things
to conſideration, who would not much rather chuſe
be Lazarus, with his hard fortune in this world,
id everlaſting conſolation in the other; than the rich
an, drowned in pleaſure in this world, and tormented
flames in the other? I ſay, the firm belief of an-

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other life does not only anſwer this objection againſt the divine providence; but does likewiſe miniſter abundant comfort and matter of joy to good men, under all their fears and troubles in this world. Nay, this conſideration alone of a bleſſed immortality in another world, of which only the chriſtian religion hath given us full and undoubted aſſurance, is of that weight and moment, as to contribute more to the ſupport of our ſpirits under the evils and calamities of this life, than all the conſiderations of philoſophy put together. They are many of them pleaſant and pretty, and fit enough to entertain and divert a man's mind under a ſlight trouble; but they are too ſpeculative and refined for common capacities, too thin and weak to bear any great ſtreſs, and to ſupport and relieve a man's mind under a ſore and heavy affliction: but this is a conſideration which hath ſtrength and ſubſtance in it, that all things will end in our unſpeakable happineſs, and that this happineſs ſhall have no end. This the apoſtle St. Paul ſpeaks of as a proper conſideration of comfort, of which we are aſſured by the chriſtian religion, that all the evils of this life ſhall in the laſt iſſue and reſult of things co-operate to our happineſs, Rom. viii. 28. "we know, ſays he, "that "all things work together for good to them that love "GOD." And 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17, 18. "for which "cauſe we faint not," &c. The apoſtle gives us an account, how they were afflicted and perſecuted, and what it was that ſupported them under all their ſufferings, ver. 8, 9, 10, 11. "we are troubled on "every ſide; yet not diſtreſſed: we are perplexed; "but not in deſpair: perſecuted; but not forſaken: "caſt down; but not deſtroyed. Always bearing "about in the body the dying of our LORD JESUS, "that the life alſo of JESUS might be made manifeſt

"in

" in our body. For we which live are always deli- SERM.
" vered unto death for JESUS ſake." And then he CCXIV.
tells us, what it was that kept up the ſpirits of Chriſtians under theſe ſharp ſufferings, viz. the aſſurance which the chriſtian religion gives us of a reſurrection to a better and happier life, ver. 14. " knowing that " he which raiſed up the LORD JESUS, ſhall raiſe us " up alſo by JESUS." And then it follows, ver. 16. " for which cauſe we faint not: but though our out- " ward man periſh, yet the inward man is renewed " day by day;" that is, though our bodies be waſted and weakened, yet every day we grew ſtronger in the reſolution of our minds, becauſe " our light af- " fliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for " us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glo- " ry; while we look not at the things which are " ſeen, but at the things which are not ſeen: for the " things which are ſeen are temporal; but the things " which are not ſeen are eternal." And then, at the beginning of the next chapter he ſtill urgeth the ſame conſideration of comfort, that ſo ſoon as we paſs out of the troubles of this life, we ſhall enter upon the happineſs of the other. " For we know," that is, we Chriſtians are aſſured, " that if our earthly houſe " of this tabernacle were diſſolved, we have a build- " ing of GOD, an houſe not made with hands, eter- " nal in the heavens." Here you ſee is the great ground of their confidence and comfort in the worſt condition, and under the moſt grievous perſecutions which they were continually expoſed to.

And therefore our SAVIOUR and his apoſtles make no ſcruple to pronounce thoſe perſons bleſſed, who in reſpect of their ſufferings ſeemed to be of all men in the world the moſt miſerable; and they pronounce them happy, upon this very account of their ſuffer-

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ings. Matth. 10, 11, 12. "Bleſſed are they," ſays our SAVIOUR, which are perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Bleſſed are ye when men ſhall revile you, and perſecute you, and ſhall ſay all manner of evil againſt you falſly for my ſake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven." Great ſufferings for GOD in this world do entitle us, by virtue of this gracious promiſe of our LORD, to a glorious reward in the other. So likewiſe St. James exhorts Chriſtians to rejoice in their ſufferings, Jam. i. 2. "my brethren, account it all joy when ye fall into divers trials." And chap. v. 11. "behold," ſays he, "we count them happy which endure." And St. Peter, to the ſame purpoſe, 1 Pet. iv. 14. "If ye be perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſake, happy are ye." So ſolid a comfort to men under all the troubles and afflictions of this world, is that firm aſſurance which the chriſtian religion gives us of a future happineſs, as to bring even the greateſt miſeries which in this life we are liable to, in ſome ſenſe, under the notion of bleſſedneſs.

And this was not only fine talk, like the glorious brags of the Stoicks; but the primitive Chriſtians, in infinite examples, gave the real proof and evidence of it, in their conſtant and chearful behaviour under the moſt cruel and intolerable torments. *Non magna loquimur, ſed vivimus*, ſays Tertul. in the name of the Chriſtians. "We do not talk great things, but do them; and demonſtrate the real effect of our words and profeſſion in our lives and actions." Never did the arguments fetched from another world, and the aſſurance of a bleſſed immortality, diſplay their force and virtue more, than in the joyful ſufferings of the firſt Chriſtians, and their generous contempt of all

all that was dear to them in this world, "in hope of SER
"that eternal life, which GOD that cannot lie hath CCXV
"promiſed;" and which the Son of GOD hath enſured to them, by his reſurrection from the dead.

II. The chriſtian religion promiſeth to every ſincere Chriſtian the inward aſſiſtance, and ſupport, and comfort of GOD's holy Spirit, to bear up the weakneſs of human nature under it's heavieſt preſſures of fears or ſufferings. And this is peculiar to the chriſtian religion: for though the providence of GOD did take particular care of good men in all ages, and he did always, in ſome good meaſure, aſſiſt them to do their duty, and afford comfort and ſupport to them under great trials and ſufferings; yet GOD never made ſo expreſs and general a promiſe of this to all good men, as he hath done by the chriſtian religion. Never was ſo conſtant a preſence and influence of the divine Spirit vouchſafed and aſſured to men under any diſpenſation, as that of the goſpel, wherein the Spirit of GOD is promiſed to all that ſincerely embrace the chriſtian religion, to reſide and dwell in them, not only to all the purpoſes of ſanctification and holineſs, but to ſupport and comfort under all troubles and ſufferings; for which reaſon the goſpel is called "the "miniſtration of the Spirit," and is upon this account ſaid to be "more glorious" than any other revelation which GOD had ever made to mankind. And therefore this is ſaid to be eſſential to every Chriſtian, to have the Spirit of GOD dwell in him. Rom. viii. 9, 10. ſpeaking of all true Chriſtians, "ye are," ſaith St. Paul, "not in the fleſh, but in the Spirit, if ſo be "that the Spirit of GOD dwell in you. Now if any "man have not the Spirit of CHRIST, he is none of "his." So that every ſincere Chriſtian is "made "partaker of the promiſe of the Spirit through faith;"

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that is, by his belief of the chriſtian religion, he is under the immediate conduct and influence of GOD's holy Spirit, and hath this bleſſed guide and comforter always preſent with him, nay continually dwelling and reſiding in him, if we do not grieve, and quench, and drive him away from us by our ill treatment of him, and reſiſtance of his bleſſed motions.

And this promiſe of the Spirit, our SAVIOUR had a very particular reſpect to, when he preſcribes faith in himſelf as a ſpecial remedy againſt that trouble which poſſeſſed their minds, upon the apprehenſion of his departure from them; and therefore he tells them ſo often, that when he was gone from them, he would ſend them "another comforter" or advocate, who ſhould undertake their cauſe, and would ſtand by them in their greateſt troubles and temptations. He tells them, that he himſelf would be an advocate for them in heaven: but becauſe that was at a great diſtance, and might not be ſo ſenſible a comfort to them, he promiſeth to ſend them another advocate, that ſhould be preſent with them here on earth, and upon all occaſions undertake their patronage and defence. So that all things conſidered, he aſſures them there was ſo little reaſon to be troubled at his departure from them, that they had cauſe rather to be glad of it, becauſe it would turn to their great advantage; and inſtead of the benefit of his outward teaching and preſence, they ſhould have the inward preſence and teaching of his Spirit, and the continual aids and ſupports of his grace. "I "go my way," ſays he, John xvi. 5, 6, 7. "I go "my way to him that ſent me, and none of you aſk-"eth me, whither goeſt thou? but becauſe I have "ſaid theſe things unto you, ſorrow hath filled your "heart. Nevertheleſs, I tell you the truth, it is ex-"pedient for you that I go away: for if I go not a-"way,

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" way, the Comforter will not come unto you: but " if I depart, I will ſend him unto you." And ſo the evangeliſt tells us before, chap. vii. 39. that " the " Spirit was not to be given, till JESUS was firſt glo- " rified." "This," ſays he, " ſpake he of the Spirit, " which they that believed on him ſhould receive: " for the holy Ghoſt was not yet given, becauſe JE- " SUS was not yet glorified;" plainly declaring, that according to the wiſe diſpenſation of GOD, it was ſo ordered, that the ſending of the holy Ghoſt for the propagating of the goſpel, by thoſe miraculous powers which were to be conferred upon the firſt publiſhers of it, and for the ſupporting and comforting of Chriſtians under the ſharp trials and ſufferings to which they were to be expoſed, was the fruit of CHRIST's aſcenſion into heaven, and his ſitting at the right-hand of the Majeſty on high, and the firſt boon which he ſhould obtain of his Father, by the virtue and power of his interceſſion. " I will pray the " Father, ſays he, ver. 16. of this chap. " and he " ſhall ſend you another advocate, the Spirit of truth, " and he ſhall abide with you for ever. He ſhall " ſend you another Comforter;" ſo our tranſlation renders the word παρακλητον: but it moſt properly ſignifies an advocate or patron, that undertakes our defence and pleads our cauſe for us. And this the holy Ghoſt, in a moſt eminent and remarkable manner, was to the apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians, when they were called to anſwer for themſelves before kings and governors. They were generally men of low condition and mean breeding, eaſily daſht out of countenance before great men; and therefore our SAVIOUR promiſed that the holy Ghoſt ſhould be their advocate, and ſhould prompt and aſſiſt them in the pleading of their cauſe. Matth. x. 18, 19. " Ye ſhall be

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" brought before governors and kings, for my ſake:
" but when they deliver you up, take no thought,
" how or what ye ſhall ſpeak; for it ſhall be given
" you in that ſame hour what ye ſhall ſpeak; for it
" is not you that ſpeak; but the Spirit of your Fa-
" ther which ſpeaketh in you." Or, as it is in St. Luke, chap. xii. ver. 12. " The holy Ghoſt ſhall
" teach you in the ſame hour, what ye ought to ſay." And yet more fully, chap. xxi. ver. 12, 14, 15. where ſpeaking again of " their being brought before kings
" and rulers for his name's ſake," he gives them this charge, " ſettle it therefore in your hearts, not to me-
" ditate before what ye ſhall anſwer; for I will give
" you a mouth and wiſdom, which all your adverſa-
" ries ſhall not be able to gainſay, or reſiſt."

And this promiſe we find remarkably made good to St. Stephen, Acts vi. 10. of whom it is there ſaid, that " his enemies were not able to reſiſt the wiſdom
" and the ſpirit by which he ſpake." And to St. Paul likewiſe, when he was firſt called to anſwer for himſelf at Rome, as he himſelf tells Timothy, 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17. " At my firſt anſwer no man ſtood with
" me; but all men forſook me: notwithſtanding the
" LORD ſtood with me and ſtrengthened me."

And though this was extraordinary, yet all Chriſtians have, by virtue of this promiſe, the ordinary aſſiſtance and comfort of GOD's holy Spirit in all their troubles and afflictions. By this Spirit we may in all our diſtreſſes with confidence make our addreſſes to GOD, " having acceſs by one Spirit to the Father," as St. Paul ſpeaks, Eph. ii. 18. By the ſame Spirit we are aſſiſted in our prayers, and directed many times what to aſk of GOD, ſuitable to the condition which his providence deſigns to bring us into; which ſeems to be the apoſtle's meaning, Rom. viii. 26. " like-
" wiſe

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riſe the Spirit alſo helpeth our infirmities: for we now not what to pray for as we ought; but the ſpirit itſelf maketh interceſſion for us;" that is, geſts to us ſuch requeſts as are fit for us to put up GOD. By the ſame Spirit is ſecretly infuſed into ſouls, "peace and joy in believing, great conſolation and good hope through grace." Hence are ſe expreſſions in ſcripture of "the conſolation of he Spirit," and of "joy in the holy Ghoſt," the cordial in the world in all caſes of trouble.

And in extraordinary caſes, good men, by virtue his promiſe of the Spirit, may expect to be borne and comforted in a very extraordinary and ſuperural manner, under the greateſt tribulations and erings "for righteouſneſs ſake." This was very ial and remarkable in the primitive Chriſtians, who e expoſed to the moſt fierce and cruel perſecuti; and may ſtill be expected in like caſes of extrainary ſufferings for the teſtimony of GOD's truth. If ye be reproached," ſaith St. Peter, 1 Pet. iv. 14. for the name of CHRIST, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of GOD reſteth upon you." e Spirit of GOD is there promiſed, to ſtrengthen l ſupport all that ſuffer for the name of CHRIST, in ery conſpicuous and glorious manner; according hat prayer of St. Paul, Col. i. 11. that Chriſtians ght be "ſtrengthened with all might, according to GOD's glorious power, unto all long-ſuffering with joyfulneſs." For when GOD exerciſeth good men h trials more than human, and ſufferings which beyond the ordinary rate of human ſtrength and tience to bear, he hath engaged himſelf to aſſiſt d endow them with more than human courage and olution. So St. Paul tells the Corinthians, who d not yet felt the utmoſt rage of perſecution, 1 Cor.

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x. 13. "no temptation," or trial, "hath yet befallen "you, but what is common to men;" nothing but what is frequently incident to human nature, and what, by an ordinary aſſiſtance of GOD's Grace, men may grapple with; but in caſe GOD calls men to extraordinary ſufferings, "he is faithful that hath promiſed, "who will not ſuffer you to be tempted above what ye "are able; but will with the temptation alſo make a "way to eſcape, that ye may be able to bear it." And why ſhould we be daunted at the weight of an affliction, if we be well aſſured that our ſtrength ſhall be increaſed in proportion to our burden.

And wherever this promiſe is not made good, there is ſome defect on our part; either men are not ſincere in the profeſſion of the truth, and then no wonder if they fall for fear of ſuffering; or they have been too confident of themſelves, and have not with that earneſtneſs and importunity they ought, prayed to GOD for his grace and aſſiſtance, and thereupon GOD hath juſtly left them to try their ſtrength againſt a violent and powerful temptation; as he did Peter, who for all his confidence, did upon no very great temptation deny his SAVIOUR: but even in this caſe, where there is truth and ſincerity at the bottom, GOD gives to ſuch perſons, as he did to Peter, the opportunity of recovering themſelves by repentance.

There are three particulars more remain: but I ſhall proceed no farther at this time.

SER-

SERMON CCXVII.

The true remedy againſt the troubles of life.

JOHN xiv. 1.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in GOD; *believe alſo in me.*

FROM theſe words I propoſed to ſhew, what force and virtue there is in the remedy propoſed by our SAVIOUR, to mitigate and allay our troubles; and I told you that our SAVIOUR here preſcribes a double remedy. SERM. CCXVII. The third ſermon on this text.

Firſt, faith in GOD, the great creator and governor of the world.

Secondly, faith in himſelf, the Son of GOD and SAVIOUR of men. I have ſpoken to the firſt, and have likewiſe entered upon the

Second, and here I propounded to ſhew, what farther conſiderations of comfort and ſupport faith in CHRIST, and the firm belief of the chriſtian religion, do afford to good men, for the allaying and mitigating of their greateſt fears and troubles. And I mentioned five.

I. Faith in CHRIST gives us full aſſurance of immortality, and the rewards of another world.

II. It promiſeth to every ſincere Chriſtian the inward aſſiſtance and ſupport of GOD's holy Spirit. Thus far I have gone. I now proceed.

III. It aſſures us of the ſpecial efficacy of our prayers with GOD, either for our deliverance from trouble, or for the aids and ſupports of his grace under it.

Now concerning the great efficacy of our prayers with

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with GOD, there are ſeveral very particular ar
markable promiſes and declarations in the new
ment. Matt. vii. 7. " aſk, and it ſhall be given
" ſeek, and ye ſhall find: knock, and it ſhall
" pened unto you." Matt. xxi. 22. " and all t
" whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in prayer, believing, y
" receive." John xv. 7. " if ye abide in me, an
" words abide in you, ye ſhall aſk what ye will
" it ſhall be done unto you." But then he d
us to put up our petitions to GOD " in his n
as the way to make them prevalent, John xiv. 1
" And whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in my name, tha
" I do, that the Father may be glorified in the
" If ye ſhall aſk any thing in my name, I will d
And chap. xvi. 23, 24. he repeats this promiſe
for their ſupport and comfort under the tribul
which they ſhould endure, " and in that day y
" aſk me nothing. Verily, verily I ſay unto
" whatſoever ye ſhall aſk the Father in my nan
" will give it you. Hitherto have ye aſke
" thing in my name: aſk, and ye ſhall receive
" your joy may be full." And again, ver. 2
" at that day ye ſhall aſk in my name: and I ſ
" unto you, that I will pray the Father for yo
" the Father himſelf loveth you." He aſſures
of GOD's merciful inclination towards them,
it would add any thing to their comfortable
rance of having their prayers heard, he could
told them, that he would pray the Father for
St. James particularly comforts the Chriſtian
der their trials upon this conſideration, that
is ready to give wiſdom and ſtrength to d
ourſelves as we ought under ſufferings, if we
ly beg it of him, Jam. i. 2, 3, 4, 5. " my bre
" count it all joy when ye fall into divers tem

ıs, knowing this, that the trying of your faith orketh patience; but let patience have her per- ſt work, that ye may be perfect, and entire, anting nothing." And ſince this requires great ɔm to bear great afflictions with patience, there- he adds, that GOD is always ready to grant this ɔm and grace to thoſe that heartily beg it of him, any of you lack wiſdom, let him aſk of GOD, ıat giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth ɔt: and it ſhall be given him." 1 John iii. 22. nd whatſoever we aſk, we receive of him, be- ıuſe we keep his commandments, and do thoſe ıings which are pleaſing in his ſight." And chap. 4, 15, "And this is the confidence that we have ı him;" that is, we Chriſtians: for he had ſaid efore, "theſe things have I written unto you that elieve on the name of the Son of GOD;" and then llows, "and this is the confidence that we have ı him, that if we aſk any thing according to his ill, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear- h us, whatſoever we aſk, we know that we have ıe petitions that we deſired of him;" that is, ıgh we have not preſently the thing we prayed yet we are as ſure of it, as if we had it. The eſt prayer of every ſincere Chriſtian is very pow- l and available with GOD. So St. James aſſures chap. v. 16. "The effectual fervent prayer of a ighteous man availeth much." Much more the ed prayers of the faithful. So our SAVIOUR de- es, Matt. xviii. 19. "Again I ſay unto you, hat if two of you ſhall agree on earth as touch- ıg any thing that they ſhall aſk, it ſhall be done ɔr them of my Father which is in heaven."

ll theſe promiſes and declarations do certainly ify a more ſpecial efficacy and prevalency of the

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prayers of Chriſtians. And though there was a miraculous power of prayer in the primitive times, which is now ceaſed, and of which St. James plainly ſpeaks, chap. v. 14, 15. "Is any ſick among "you? let him call for the elders of the church, and "let them pray over him, anointing him with oil "in the name of the LORD: and the prayer of faith "ſhall ſave the ſick, and the LORD ſhall raiſe him "up:" yet it is certain that theſe promiſes extended farther, to the efficacy of the prayers of the faithful in ſuch caſes. And ſo our SAVIOUR extends this promiſe, Mat. xxi. 22. For after he had ſaid in the verſe before, "verily I ſay unto you, if ye have faith "and doubt not, ye ſhall not only do this which is "done to the fig-tree; but alſo if ye ſhall ſay unto "this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou caſt "into the ſea, it ſhall de done:" after this he immediately ſubjoins, "and all things whatſoever "ye ask in prayer, believing, ye ſhall receive;' hereby declaring that the efficacy of the prayers of Chriſtians was not limited only to thoſe miraculous effects, which were but to continue for a time; but that this promiſe was to be extended to the prayers of the faithful in all caſes and all times.

And indeed all the grounds and reaſons of the efficacy and prevalency of our prayers which are mentioned in the new teſtament, do equally concern Chriſtians in all times; as that we pray to GOD in the name and mediation of JESUS CHRIST; upon which our SAVIOUR very frequently when he makes this promiſe lays great ſtreſs, and ſeems to render it as the reaſon of the ſpecial efficacy of our prayers. John xiv. 13, 14. "And whatſoever ye ſhall aſk "in my name, that will I do, that the Father may "be glorified in the ſon. If ye ſhall aſk any thing

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"in my name, I will do it." And chap. xvi. 23, 24. "Verily verily I ſay unto you, whatſoever ye "ſhall aſk the Father in my name, he will give it "you. Hitherto have ye aſked nothing in my name: "aſk, and ye ſhall receive."

Another reaſon of the acceptance and prevalency of our prayers, is, that the Spirit of GOD which dwells in all true Chriſtians does help our weakneſs, and ſecretly directs us to aſk of GOD thoſe things which are according to his will, and does as it were intercede for us. Rom. viii. 26. "Likewiſe the Spi-"rit alſo helpeth our infirmities: for we know not "what we ſhould pray for as we ought: but the "Spirit itſelf maketh interceſſion for us." And ver. 27. "And he that ſearcheth the hearts, knoweth "what is the mind of the Spirit, becauſe he maketh "interceſſion for the ſaints, according to the will of "GOD." And no wonder if thoſe petitions are very prevalent, which we are aſſiſted and directed to put to GOD, according to his will.

And this certainly is a great comfort under any trouble, that we can have free acceſs to GOD by prayer, in confidence that he will grant us thoſe requeſts which we put up to him according to his will. And this the apoſtle to the Hebrews mentions more than once, as an argument to them to continue ſtedfaſt in the profeſſion of their religion, notwithſtanding the perſecution that attended it, becauſe we may at all times addreſs ourſelves to GOD in confidence of his gracious help and aſſiſtance. Heb. iv. 16. after he had exhorted them "to hold faſt their profeſſion," as an encouragement thereto, he adds the free acceſs we may have to GOD for his help and ſupport. "Let "us therefore," ſays he, "come boldly," or with great freedom and confidence, "to the throne of "grace,

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" grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find favour " with him for our ſeaſonable help and ſuccour." And to the ſame purpoſe, chap. x. 19, 20. " Hav- " ing therefore, brethren, freedom to enter into the " holieſt by the blood of JESUS," that is, having acceſs to GOD in prayer by JESUS CHRIST, " let us " draw near with a true heart, in full aſſurance of " faith," that is, in perfect confidence that our prayers will be graciouſly heard and anſwered; upon which he adds, " let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our " faith without wavering: for he is faithful that hath promiſed." If we continue ſtedfaſt to GOD, and the profeſſion of his truth, he will make good all that he hath promiſed, both of preſent ſupport under our ſufferings, and of the glorious reward of them in another life: he will hear our prayers, and grant us the aids and ſupplies of his grace, as we ſtand in need of them.

IV. The chriſtian religion propounds to us the beſt and moſt admirable pattern that ever was of patience and conſtancy of mind under the apprehenſion of approaching evils, or the ſenſe of our preſent ſufferings, and of a contented and chearful ſubmiſſion to the will of GOD in the ſaddeſt condition to which human nature is incident; and that is the pattern of our bleſſed SAVIOUR, who, for this reaſon among others, was ſo great a ſufferer in ſo many kinds, that he might go before us in this rough and difficult way, and " leave us an example that we ſhould follow his " ſteps;" that we might learn from him how to calm and quiet our ſpirits, to appeaſe and huſh the tumults of our paſſions under the ſevereſt diſpenſations of GOD's providence towards us, and to bend our wills to a patient ſubmiſſion to the will of our heavenly Father, under the ſoreſt afflictions and ſharp-

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eſt ſufferings: for though our bleſſed SAVIOUR pray- SERM. CCXVII.
ed ſo earneſtly to his Father, that "that bitter cup "might paſs from him," yet how quietly and chearfully did he reſign and yield himſelf up to the will of GOD, ſaying, "yet not my will, but thine be done." Human nature ſhrunk and gave back at the ſight of his dreadful ſufferings; but his reaſon over-ruled the inclinations of nature, and kept him to a ſteady reſolution of ſubmitting to the will of GOD: and therefore when Peter attempted his reſcue, he commanded him to deſiſt, ſaying, "put up thy ſword into the "ſheath, the cup which my Father hath given me, "ſhall I not drink it?" Joh. xviii. 11. And though he had as quick a ſenſe of ſuffering as any man, yet "with what patience did he poſſeſs his ſoul?" with what meekneſs and humility of Spirit did he bear and yield to it? "He was led as a lamb to the ſlaugh- "ter, and as a ſheep before the ſhearers is dumb, ſo "he opened not his mouth; when he was reviled he "reviled not again; when he ſuffered he threatned "not, but committed himſelf to him that judgeth "righteouſly." And thus "it became the captain "of our ſalvation," that he might be a perfect pattern to us of patience and ſubmiſſion to the will of GOD, of a meek and undiſturbed mind under the greateſt bodily pains, and the extreme anguiſh of his ſoul, "to be made perfect by ſufferings."

So that under the greateſt preſent evils, or the moſt fearful apprehenſion of future evil and ſuffering, we ſhould fix our eye ſtedfaſtly upon this great and glorious example of patience and conſtancy and meekneſs; of a due ſenſe, and yet of a moſt decent behaviour under the heavieſt load of affliction, that was ever laid upon any of the ſons of men, looking, as the apoſtle exhorts, Heb. xii. 2, 3. "looking unto

SERM. CCXVII. "JESUS, the author and finiſher of our faith; who "for the joy that was ſet before him, endured the "croſs, and deſpiſed the ſhame;" and "conſider- "ing him, who endured ſuch contradiction of ſin- "ners againſt himſelf; leſt we be weary and faint "in our minds."

And ſurely if we would but let our minds dwell a while upon this conſideration of the ſufferings of the Son of GOD, and his great meekneſs, and patience, and ſubmiſſion to the will of GOD under them, it would mightily conduce to the mitigating of our trouble, and bringing us "to poſſeſs our ſouls in patience," in the ſaddeſt condition that can befal us.

And what conſideration more proper for us than this, when we are going to receive the bleſſed ſacrament, wherein the ſufferings of the Son of GOD are repreſented to us, in the ſymbols of his body broken, and his blood ſhed for the remiſſion of our ſins? and there are many conſiderations which this ſight is apt to ſuggeſt to us, which are ſo many powerful arguments to quiet and comfort our minds under the greateſt troubles and ſufferings which we are liable to; ſuch as theſe:

1. The grievous ſufferings which the Son of GOD was expoſed to, do clearly ſhew us that the good things of this life are not ſo valuable, nor the evils and ſufferings of it ſo conſiderable as we are apt to fancy and imagine; when the beſt man that ever lived was ſo deſtitute even of the common comforts and conveniences of human life, and had ſo large a ſhare of the calamities and ſufferings of it. If we could but rectify our opinion of things, it would go a great way in making any of the evils and afflictions of this life tolerable. If GOD ſee good to reduce us to poverty and want, let us think of him, who "being

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"LORD of all, had not where to lay his head;" who "being rich, for our ſakes became poor, that we "through his poverty might be made rich." To be deſtitute of worldly accommodations cannot ſeem ſo diſmal and deſpicable a ſight, when we conſider whoſe lot it was to live in a low and indigent condition; the very conſideration whereof doth not only make poverty tolerable but even glorious.

So likewiſe, when we are "perſecuted for righte-"ouſneſs ſake," and exerciſed with ſufferings and reproaches; when we are ready to be diſcouraged in well-doing by the oppoſition we meet withal from the ingratitude of men, and the malicious interpretation of our good actions, perverting the beſt things, done with the beſt mind, and to the beſt end, to ſome ill purpoſe and deſign; let us "look to JESUS," and "conſider him who endured ſuch contradiction of "ſinners againſt himſelf," and this will help to abate the hideous apprehenſion of theſe things.

2. The ſufferings of the Son of GOD are a demonſtration to us, that the love and favour of GOD, wherein the chief happineſs of man conſiſts, are not to be eſtimated and meaſured by outward proſperity in this world; much leſs can it be concluded from temporal afflictions and ſufferings, that GOD hath no favour and kindneſs for thoſe whom he thinks fit to exerciſe with them. For we ſee plainly, by this inſtance of the grievous ſufferings of his Son, that GOD may moſt deeply wound and afflict thoſe whom he moſt dearly loves: and if we can be ſecure of the favour of GOD, and his loving-kindneſs, why ſhould "our "hearts be troubled" and diſmayed at the apprehenſion of any evil that can befal us?

GOD may love his children, and yet chaſten them very ſeverely: nay that he does ſo, is rather an argu-

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ment that they are his children, and that he loves them, and is concerned for them. So, I am ſure, the apoſtle teacheth us to argue, Heb. xii. 6, 7, 8. "For "whom the LORD loveth, he chaſteneth, and ſcourg- "eth every ſon whom he receiveth. If ye endure "chaſtening, GOD dealeth with you as with ſons: "for what ſon is he whom the father chaſteneth not? "But if ye be without chaſtiſement, whereof all are "partakers, then are ye baſtards, and not ſons." The heavieſt and moſt grievous load of ſufferings that ever was laid on any man, GOD permitted to be laid on "his only begotten Son, the dearly beloved of his "ſoul, in whom he was well pleaſed." The greater our afflictions are, and the more we ſuffer for "righ- "teouſneſs ſake," ſo much the liker are we to the Son of GOD, and ſo much the more likely to be the ſons and children of GOD. It is true, as the apoſtle tells us, that "no affliction for the preſent is joyous, "but grievous:" but ſurely it is a great mitigation of it, to conſider what a glorious example and argument of patience our religion propoſeth to us, for our encouragement under ſufferings; that the beſt man that ever was, lived in the moſt afflicted condition; and the greateſt ſufferer that ever was, or can be, was "the dearly beloved Son of GOD."

3. In the victorious ſufferings of the Son of GOD, we ſee the world conquered to our hand, all the terrors and temptations of it diſarmed, and all it's force baffled and broken. This conſideration our SAVIOUR makes uſe of to ſupport the faint ſpirits of his diſciples, under the melancholy apprehenſions which they had of ſufferings, John xvi. 33. "In the world ye "ſhall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I "have overcome the world." The great work is done to our hands; affliction and death are vanquiſh-

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ed and overcome by him. That conqueſt which the "captain of our ſalvation" hath already made of all "the powers of darkneſs," renders our victory over them cheap and eaſy. SERM. CCXVII.

4. The temptations and ſufferings of our LORD were greater than ours are or can be: for he bore the heavy and inſupportable load of all the ſins of all mankind, and of the wreath and vengeance due to them. "The LORD hath laid on him," ſaith the prophet, Iſai. liii. 6, 7. "the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all; he was oppreſſed and afflicted." And well might he be oppreſſed with affliction, who had ſuch an intolerable burden as the ſins of all mankind to preſs him down. That paſſage is commonly applied to him, and well might he cry out in that manner, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that paſs by? behold and ſee if there be any ſorrow like unto my ſorrow, wherewith the LORD hoth afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." Such were the ſufferings of our LORD, ſo great and ſo grievous, as none of us are in any degree able to undergo. That weight under which he crouched, would cruſh us; that which he was hardly able to ſuſtain, would certainly ſink us: and do we complain and "faint in our minds," when but a very little part of the puniſhment due to us only for our own ſins is inflicted upon us? The conſideration of the heavy and unknown ſufferings of the Son of GOD, ſhould make all our afflictions not only tolerable, but light.

5. And yet we have in effect the ſame ſupport that he had. We are apt to be very much diſheartened and diſcouraged at the apprehenſion of ſufferings, from the conſideration of our own weakneſs and frailty: "but the Spirit of CHRIST dwells in us," and the ſame "glorious power that raiſed up JESUS from

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" the dead, works mightily on them that believe." St. Paul uſeth very high expreſſions in this matter, Eph. i. 19, 20. " That ye may know," ſays he, ſpeaking in general of all Chriſtians, " what is the " exceeding greatneſs of his power to us-ward who " believe, according to the working of his mighty " power, which he wrought in CHRIST, when he " raiſed him from the dead, and ſet him on his own " right hand." So that every ſincere Chriſtian is en- " dowed with a kind of omnipotency, " being able," as St. Paul ſays of himſelf, " to do all things through " CHRIST ſtrengthening him." We are of ourſelves very weak, and the temptations and terrors of the world are very powerful: but there is a principle reſiding in every true Chriſtian, that is able to bear us up againſt the world and the power of all it's temptations. " Whatſoever is born of GOD," ſays St. John, " overcometh the world: for greater is he that is in " you, than he that is in the world." The holy Spirit of GOD, which dwells in all true Chriſtians, is a more powerful principle of reſolution, and courage, and patience under the ſharpeſt trials and ſufferings, than that evil ſpirit which rules in the world is to ſtir up and ſet on the malice and rage of the world againſt us. " Ye are of GOD, and have overcome the world; " becauſe greater is he that is in you, than he that is " in the world."

6. Let us conſider farther, for whom and for what our bleſſed LORD ſuffered. Not for himſelf; but for our ſake: not for any fault of his own; for " he had " no ſin;" but for our ſins. He was perfectly innocent, but we are great and grievous offenders. We ſuffer upon our own account: but he only for our ſakes, and for our ſalvation. So that the example of our LORD's ſufferings hath an irreſtible force and virtue

virtue in it, to argue us into patience and ſubmiſſion. Did he bear the load of our ſins ſo willingly? did he "who had no ſin" ſuffer ſo patiently, to free us from eternal ſufferings? and ſhall we who are guilty think much to bear a ſmall part of that burden which he ſo chearfully underwent for us, and which falls ſo much ſhort of the due puniſhment of our faults? The penitent thief upon the croſs urged the equity and force of this argument to patience to his fellow criminal, that they who had been guilty of ſuch great crimes, and were juſtly condemned for them, ought to be patient under their ſufferings. "We indeed," ſays he, "are "juſtly condemned; for we receive the due reward of "our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiſs." SERM. CCXVII.

7. and laſtly, if we conſider the tranſcendent excellency and dignity of the perſon, who underwent ſo great ſufferings with ſo much meekneſs and patience, and with ſo even and undiſturbed a mind, this will calm and allay our paſſions, and mitigate the troubles which befal us pitiful and inconſiderable creatures, in compariſon of this prince of glory, and heir of everlaſting bliſs. When we conſider the meekneſs of this excellent perſon, the eternal Son of GOD, and with what ſubmiſſion and ſerenity of mind he demeaned himſelf under ſo great and continual provocations from his own creatures and beneficiaries, thoſe whom he had made, and whom he came to ſave; ſhall we think much to bear the indignities and affronts of our fellow-creatures? When we behold how contented this great perſon was in the meaneſt condition, how he welcomed all events, and was ſo perfectly reſigned to the will of his heavenly father, that whatever pleaſed GOD, pleaſed him; ſhall we murmur at any condition which the providence of GOD allots to us, and repine at any event whatſoever.

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Shall we reſent injuries, and affronts, and calumnies ſo heinouſly as to be out of all temper and patience, when we conſider with what meekneſs of temper, and how little emotion of mind the Son of GOD bore all theſe? how "he gave his back to the ſmiters, and "his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, and "with-held not his face from ſhame and ſpitting;" how "he was led as a lamb to the ſlaughter, and as "a ſheep before the ſhearers is dumb, ſo he opened "not his mouth; being reviled, he reviled not a-"gain; when he ſuffered, he threatned not."

To conclude, can we entertain thoughts of revenge towards the inſtruments of our ſufferings, when we have ſuch a pattern of forgiving before us, who poured out his blood for the expiation of the guilt of them that ſhed it, and ſpent his laſt breath in a moſt fervent and charitable prayer for his betrayers and murderers?

Thus we ſhould propoſe to ourſeves the pattern of our LORD's ſpirit and demeanour under ſufferings, in whom meekneſs, and ſubmiſſion, and "pa-"tience had their perfect work;" that "the ſame "mind may be in us, that was in CHRIST JESUS," and that as we have him for "an example, we may "follow his ſteps."

The laſt conſideration of comfort and ſupport under trouble, which the chriſtian religion gives us, remains yet to be ſpoken to, namely, that we are aſſured of a moſt compaſſionate, and prevalent, and perpetual patron, and advocate, and interceſſor with GOD for us.

But this, together with the application of this whole diſcourſe, I ſhall refer to the next opportunity.

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SERMON CCXVIII.

The true remedy againſt the troubles of life.

JOHN xiv. 1.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in GOD; *believe alſo in me.*

I COME now to the fifth and laſt ground of comfort, which the chriſtian religion affords to good men for their ſupport under trouble, namely, that it aſſures us of a moſt compaſſionate, and prevalent, and perpetual patron, and advocate, and interceſſor with GOD in heaven for us, namely, our bleſſed SAVIOUR, "who for the ſuffering of death was crowned "with glory and honour," advanced "at the "right hand of GOD," where "he ſits in great ma"jeſty and glory, having all power in heaven and "earth committed to him, and where he lives con"tinually to make interceſſion for us." SERM. CCXVIII. The fourth ſermon on this text.

And this is another conſideration mentioned by our SAVIOUR for the comfort of his diſciples, who were ſo ſorrowful at the thoughts of his departure from them, that though he ſhould leave the world, yet he ſhould be highly advanced in heaven, where he would certainly employ all his favour, and power, and intereſt for their benefit and advantage, and be an everlaſting patron and advocate for thoſe whoſe ſalvation he had purchaſed with ſo much ſweat and blood, preſenting our requeſts and prayers to GOD, in virtue of his moſt meritorious ſacrifice and ſufferings continually preſented to his Father, perpetually ſoliciting our cauſe, and procuring for us all thoſe bleſſings by his inter-

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interceſſion in heaven, which he had purchaſed for us by his blood upon earth. "For which reaſon," ſays the apoſtle, Heb. vii. 25. "he is able to ſave to the "uttermoſt all thoſe that come to GOD by him, ſee- "ing he ever liveth to make interceſſion for us;" that is, he is able to perfect the work of our ſalvation, which he began here upon earth; and to procure for all thoſe who addreſs their prayers to GOD in his name, whatever is needful and convenient for us, becauſe he is always at the right hand of GOD, to ſecond our prayers by his powerful interceſſion for us.

And this is a ground of comfort, though not greater and more ſubſtantial in itſelf than the other; yet more accommodated to our apprehenſions, who are naturally apt to dread the majeſty of GOD, and to ſeek out for ſome in favour with him, to be mediators and interceſſors with GOD for us, and to preſent our prayers and requeſts to him. And this was the original of the addreſſes of the heathens to the angels and ſouls departed, as a kind of intermediate and inferior deities, to preſent their prayers, and intercede with the great GOD in their behalf. And as in compliance with the general apprehenſion of mankind concerning the appeaſing of the Deity by all ſorts of ſacrifices, GOD was pleaſed to provide "one ſacrifice," which by being "once offered" ſhould "obtain e- "ternal redemption for us, and perfect for ever them "that are ſanctified," and by this means to put an end both to the carnal ſacrices of the law, and the barbarous and inhuman ſacrifices of the pagan worſhip: ſo in like condeſcenſion to the general inclinations of mankind, to addreſs themſelves to GOD by ſeveral mediators and interceſſors, GOD hath appointed "one only mediator between GOD and man, the "man CHRIST JESUS, who gave himſelf a ranſom

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" for all;" thereby to put an end to that infinite ſu- SERM. CCXVIII.
perſtition which had obtained in the world for ſo ma-
ny ages, of addreſſing their prayers to GOD by the mediation of good angels and the departed ſouls of their heroes and great men, who were, as I may ſo call them, the pagan ſaints.

So that as under the goſpel GOD hath appointed but one ſacrifice for ſin, that ſhould be of eternal efficacy; ſo but one mediator in heaven for ſinners, to offer up our prayers to GOD, and to intercede continually for us, in the power and virtue of that " one " ſacrifice once offered for the redemption of man- " kind." And therefore it is every whit as contrary to the genius and deſign of the chriſtian religion, to apply ourſelves to other interceſſors with GOD in heaven for us, whether ſaints or angels, or even the bleſſed virgin herſelf, as it would be to continue ſtill the jewiſh ſacrifices, not to ſay the heathen. For it is not clearer that there is but one proper ſacrifice under the goſpel, viz. that of CHRIST upon the croſs, than that there is but one mediator and interceſſor with GOD in heaven for us. Nay St. Paul ſpeaks as if the chriſtian religion did no more admit of more mediators than one, than of more gods than one, 1 Tim. ii. 5. " there is one GOD, and one mediator between GOD " and men, the man CHRIST JESUS, who gave him- " ſelf a ranſom for all." Nor is the force of this plain text to be avoided, by ſaying that the apoſtle here ſpeaks of a mediator of redemption, as appears by the following words, " who gave himſelf a ran- " ſom for all." For it is plain likewiſe, that he ſpeaks alſo of a mediator of interceſſion, and affirms him to be " but one," as is evident from what goes before. The apoſtle directs " prayers and ſupplications to be " made for all men," and then at the 5th ver. to whom

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whom Chriſtians ſhould addreſs theſe prayers, and by whoſe mediation, viz. to GOD, in the name and mediation of JESUS CHRIST. "For" ſays he, "there "is one GOD, and one mediator between GOD and "men, the man CHRIST JESUS." So that the apoſtle's diſcourſe does as plainly infer, that there is but one mediator of interceſſion, as that there is but one mediator of redemption.

And indeed whoſoever conſiders that quite throughout the new teſtament our SAVIOUR and his apoſtles do conſtantly direct Chriſtians to make their prayers to GOD in the name and mediation of JESUS CHRIST, and no where give ſo much as the leaſt intimation of applying ourſelves to any other interceſſors with GOD in heaven for us, may juſtly wonder how this ſuperſtition of praying to angels and ſaints departed, which hath no manner of countenance, and is by neceſſary conſequence ſo clearly forbidden, ſhould ever prevail among Chriſtians; eſpecially ſince it is a plain diminution of the virtue and efficacy of our SAVIOUR's interceſſion; or if it add nothing to it, is perfectly vain, and endleſs, and to no purpoſe. For what need of any other interceſſors with GOD in heaven for us, if that be true which the apoſtle to the Hebrews moſt expreſly affirms, that "CHRIST is able to ſave them "to the uttermoſt that come to GOD by him, ſeeing "he ever liveth to make interceſſion for them."

The prevalency and efficacy whereof may juſtly miniſter to us, in all our diſtreſſes and troubles, ſome peculiar ground of comfort above what ſprings from the bare contemplation of the divine nature; that we have ſo powerful a friend to intercede with GOD for us; one ſo dearly beloved of him, and ſo highly in his favour; one that is advanced "far above all prin-"cipalities and powers, and every name that is nam-"ed,

'ed, not only in this world, but in that which is to 'come;" and conſequently able to do more for us, than all the bleſſed ſaints and angels in heaven, and more than all the powers of darkneſs can do againſt us.

And this is matter of great comfort to us, upon theſe three conſiderations.

1. That our advocate is ſo nearly related to us, having condeſcended, by aſſuming our nature, to be allied to us, to become "bone of our bone, and fleſh of our "fleſh," ſo that we may addreſs ourſelves to him with great freedom and confidence, and, as the apoſtle expreſſeth it, Heb. iv. 16. "we may come with bold-"neſs to this throne of grace, for ſeaſonable mercy "and help in time of need." For we may moſt aſſuredly believe, that he who ſtooped to be made man, and to become one of us, will upon all occaſions moſt heartily be concerned for us, and ready to help us.

2. Conſidering that he hath already given the greateſt demonſtration of his kindneſs and compaſſion to us. We may be ſure that he who hath done and ſuffered ſuch things for our ſakes, hath a very tender love and affection for us; he who was contented to die for us, will do for us any thing elſe that may do us good.

3. And that we might have no doubt of his forwardneſs and inclination to pity and relieve us, he ſuffered the moſt grievous things himſelf that any man could ſuffer, that from the experience and remembrance of his own ſufferings, he might learn to compaſſionate us. And this the apoſtle particularly inſiſts upon, as a very comfortable conſideration to us in all our trials and ſufferings, Heb. iv. 15, 16. "For "we have not an high prieſt, which cannot be touch-"ed with the feeling of our infirmities: but was in "all points tempted like as we are; yet without ſin.

"Let

SERM. CCXVIII. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of "grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace "to help in time of need." And chap. ii. 17, 18. "wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made "like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful "and faithful high prieſt: for in that he himſelf ſuf- "fered being tempted." he is able to ſuccour them "that are tempted," So that we may reſt aſſured of his pity and ſupport in all our afflictions and trials, who knows both the infirmity of our nature, and hath himſelf had experience of greater ſufferings than any of us either ſhall or can be exerciſed withal.

And as for the general concernment of his truth, and religion, and church upon earth, that which all good men are with ſo much reaſon ſolicitous about, this is his proper care, and the great buſineſs that he is intent upon, now that he is in heaven, to protect and defend his truth, and religion, and the church which profeſſeth it, ſo that "the gates of hell ſhall not pre- "vail againſt it." This is his kingdom, for the effectual adminiſtration whereof "all power in heaven "and earth is committed to him." And as he intercedeth with his Father for every particular Chriſtian, ſo much more for "his church, which is his "body;" to preſerve her from all dangers that threaten her ruin, and to guard her againſt the power and malice of all her enemies. For to this end was he advanced to the right hand of GOD, that he might continue there, "till he had made his enemies his "footſtool." And this kingdom of his ſhall continue in his hands, "till he have put down all rule, and "all authority, and power," that ſets itſelf againſt "him: for he muſt reign till he have put all things "under his feet."

So that though truth may be obſcured and cloud-

ed,

ed for a time, and the profeſſors of it grievouſly harraſſed and oppreſt, yet it ſhall not finally be borne down, but ſhall at length prevail againſt all oppoſition; becauſe he who hath undertaken the protection of it is mighty, the "King of kings, and LORD of "lords," the chief favourite of heaven, who is continually "at the right hand of GOD, and lives for ever "to make interceſſion for us." SERM. CCXVIII.

And thus I have, as briefly as I well could, repreſented to you, what force and virtue there is in the two remedies here preſcribed by our SAVIOUR, for the mitigating and allaying of our troubles, viz. faith in GOD, the great Creator and governor of the world, and faith likewiſe in himſelf, the Son of GOD and SAVIOUR of men. "Let not your heart be troubled: "ye believe in GOD; believe alſo in me."

And now to apply this diſcourſe to ourſelves: the inferences I ſhall make from it ſhall be theſe three.

I. That in all our troubles and adverſities, of what kind ſoever, we ſhould ſupport and comfort ourſelves with the firm belief of the providence of almighty GOD, and of his tender and compaſſionate care of mankind, eſpecially of "thoſe that fear him, and put their "truſt in his mercy"

II. We ſhould put a high value upon the chriſtian religion, and "hold faſt the profeſſion of it without "wavering" which affords to us ſuch firm and ſolid grounds of comfort and ſupport under all troubles and afflictions, as are no where elſe to be found; ſuch as neither the light of nature, nor any other revelation that GOD ever made of himſelf to mankind, do give us the notice and knowledge of.

III. Since the prayers of CHRIST are ſo effectual and prevalent with GOD, let us by frequent and fervent prayers make our requeſts known to GOD; and

let

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let us " with confidence and full aſſurance of faith, " addreſs ourſelves to the throne of grace, that we " may obtain mercy, and find favour with him, for " our ſeaſonable help and ſupport in the time of " need." I ſhall ſpeak briefly to theſe, and ſo conclude this diſcourſe.

I. In all troubles and adverſities, of what kind ſoever, under all afflictions and ſufferings that may befal us, of loſs or pain, of poverty and ſickneſs, of reproach and perſecution for righteouſneſs ſake, and under the moſt fearful apprehenſions of danger and diſtreſs, to all human appearance inevitably threatning us, in our perſons and private concernments, or with relation to the publick peace and tranquility, or to that which ought to be infinitely dearer to us than all theſe, our religion, which is the great concernment of our ſouls, and of all eternity, when we have no hope any where elſe, no viſible means of help and redreſs, when we are almoſt in diſpair of avoiding the danger, and warding off the blow that is made at us, when ruin and deſtruction ſeem juſt to have overtaken us, and are ready to devour us with open mouth, and to ſwallow us up quick; in a word, when we are reduced to the greateſt extremity and diſtreſs that can be imagined, even in this caſe, if ever it ſhould happen, we ſhould ſupport our minds with a firm belief of the providence of almighty God, and of his tender and compaſſionate care of mankind, eſpecially of " thoſe that fear him, " and put their truſt in his mercy;" and comfort our ſelves, as the holy and divine pſalmiſt does, in all our fears and troubles, " what time I am afraid, I will " truſt in thee," Pſal. lvi. 3. And he tells us that every good man hath ground and reaſon for this confidence, Pſal. cxii. 7, 8. ſpeaking of the righteous and good man, " he ſhall not," ſays he, " be afraid of " evil

" evil tidings; his heart is fixed, truſting in the SERM.
" LORD. His heart is eſtabliſhed, he ſhall not be CCXVIII.
" afraid." And Pſal. xxvii. 1. " The LORD is my
" light and my ſalvation, whom ſhall I fear? the
" LORD is the ſtrength of my life; of whom ſhall I
" be afraid?" Pſal. lxii. 5, 6, 7, 8. " My ſoul, wait
" thou only upon GOD: for my expectation is from
" him. He only is my rock and my ſalvation; he is
" my defence, I ſhall not be moved. In GOD is my
" ſalvation and my glory: the rock of my ſtrength,
" and my refuge is in GOD. Truſt in him at all
" times, ye people, pour out your heart before him.
" GOD is a refuge for us." And Pſal. xlvi. 1, 2, 7.
" GOD is our refuge and ſtrength; and a very preſent
" help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though
" the earth be removed; and though the mountains
" be carried into the midſt of the ſea. The LORD
" of hoſts is with us; the GOD of Jacob is our re-
" fuge." To which I will add that comfortable pro-
miſe, Iſai. xxvi. 3. " thou wilt keep him in perfect
" peace, whoſe mind is ſtayed on thee; becauſe he
" truſteth in thee."

Thus we may, in all conditions that may befal us, in our greateſt fears and troubles, eaſe our hearts, by repoſing ourſelves upon GOD, in confidence of his ſupport and deliverance, of his care and providence, to prevent and divert the evils we fear; or of his gracious help to bear us up under them; and of his mercy and goodneſs to deliver us from them, when he ſees beſt; provided always that we be careful of our duty to him, and do what becomes us, and nothing elſe.

For our more particular direction herein,

1. Let us depend upon GOD, and entirely confide in his goodneſs and care, and truſt his wiſdom and

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power for our protection and deliverance: for here is our great ſecurity. In all our difficulties and troubles, the providence of GOD is infinitely more to us, than any prudence and conduct of our own. He hath a thouſand ways to divert and put by the evils which are levelled againſt us, "to turn the counſels of men "backward, and make their devices of none effect." When we can do nothing to help and ſave ourſelves, "his right hand, and his arm, and the light of his "countenance" can do it, if he have a favour for us.

2. Let us ſo truſt GOD, as to neglect no prudent and lawful means for our ſecurity and preſervation from evil. Let us not, by our raſhneſs and folly, provoke trouble and danger, and bring them upon ourſelves. Let us, according to our SAVIOUR's counſel, "be wiſe as ſerpents, and innocent as doves." Let us uſe all that care and prudence which is conſiſtent with innocence and a good conſcience; and when we have done that, let us be no farther ſolicitous, but reſign up ourſelves, and all our concernments to the good pleaſure of GOD, and the diſpoſal of his wiſe providence; and leave it to him who made the world, to govern it, becauſe he certainly underſtands it beſt.

3. Let us be ſure to keep within the bounds of our duty, trying no unlawful means for our eaſe, and preſervation, and reſcue from the evils which we fear and lie under; by looſening the bonds of ſubjection and obedience to authority, or by any other ſiniſter and indirect means. For let us aſſure ourſelves, that GOD is never more concerned to appear for us, than when out of conſcience of our duty to him, we are contented rather to ſuffer, than work our deliverance by undue means. Let us "commit ourſelves to him in well-"doing," and do nothing, no not for the cauſe of religion, which is contrary to the plain rules and precepts of it.

II. We

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II. We ſhould put a high value upon the chriſtian religion, and "hold faſt the profeſſion of it without "wavering," which affords to us ſuch firm and ſolid grounds of comfort and ſupport under all troubles and afflictions, as are no where elſe to be found; ſuch as neither the light of nature, nor any other revelation that GOD ever made of himſelf to mankind, do give us notice and knowledge of.

We ſhould highly value the chriſtian religion, which hath "brought life and immortality to light," and hath made ſo clear a diſcovery to us of the glorious and eternal rewards of another world, for the encouragement of our faith, and ſupport of our patience under the evils and preſſures of this life; and which promiſeth, and is ready to afford to every ſincere Chriſtian, the precious aids and comforts of GOD's holy Spirit, to ſuſtain the weakneſs of human nature under the greateſt tribulations and ſufferings; and does likewiſe aſſure us of the ſpecial efficacy of our prayers with GOD; and ſets before us the beſt and moſt admirable pattern that ever was, of a contented and chearful ſubmiſſion to the will of GOD in the ſadleſt condition incident to human nature, and of perfect patience and compoſure of mind under the apprehenſion of approaching evils, and the ſenſe of preſent ſufferings; and laſtly, which aſſures us of a moſt compaſſionate, and prevalent, and perpetual patron, and advocate, and interceſſor with GOD in heaven for us. All theſe are peculiar advantages of the chriſtian religion, and ought to be ſo many endearments of it to us, and engagements "to hold faſt the profeſſion "of it." This builds our comfort and hope upon a rock, which will abide firm againſt all rains, and winds, and ſtorms. And if we ſuffer ourſelves to be removed from it, we quit the only foundation of all our

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our comfort in this life, and happineſs in the next. So that if we would "hold faſt the confidence, and the "rejoicing of hope, firm unto the end," we muſt "take "heed," as the apoſtle to the Hebrews, chap. iii. 12. cautions the Chriſtians in his time, we muſt, I ſay, "take heed, leſt there be in any of us an evil heart of "unbelief, in departing from the living GOD," that is, to fall off from the profeſſion of his truth and religion. A religion worthy of all men to be received and adhered to; becauſe as it calls us to ſufferings, ſo it affords the greateſt comforts and ſupports under them, as is evident from the chearful and joyful behaviour of the primitive Chriſtians and martyrs, under the greateſt extremities of ſufferings and torments; the like inſtances whereto of patience and conſtancy, under ſo long and repeated perſecutions, no other religion, that ever was in the world, is able to produce.

III. and laſtly, ſince the prayers of Chriſtians are ſo effectual and prevalent with GOD, let us, by frequent and fervent "prayer, in every thing, make our re-"queſts known to GOD;" and let us "with confi-"dence and full aſſurance of faith addreſs ourſelves to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, "and find favour with him for our ſeaſonable help "and ſupport in the time of need." Let us, as our SAVIOUR exhorts his diſciples, "watch and pray, "leſt we enter into temptation." And, as the apoſtle likewiſe exhorts, let us "be ſober, and vigilant, and "watch unto prayer," taking all opportunities for it, and ſpending much time in this duty, than which none of all the duties enjoined by the chriſtian religion will turn to a better and more comfortable account, if our hearts and lives be but anſwerable to our prayers.

Let us earneſtly beg of GOD, that his watchful and merciful providence would undertake the care of us; that

that he would fit and prepare us for every condition which he hath deſigned to bring us into; and that he would teach us to demean ourſelves in it as we ought; that he would conſider our frailties, and "lay no "greater load of affliction upon us, than he will give "us grace and ſtrength to bear;" that if he ſees it good to exerciſe any of us with afflictions and ſufferings in any kind, he would make us "able to ſtand in that "evil day, and when we have done all to ſtand." SERM. CCXVIII.

And if inſtead of vain murmurings, and complaints, and terrifying ourſelves with fears of what may never happen, we would, after the example of holy David, "betake ourſelves to prayer," and by this means engage the providence of GOD for our protection from evil, or for our ſupport under it; we ſhould certainly do much better for ourſelves, and contribute much more, than we can do any other way, to the prevention of any evil that we can fear, or to the mitigating or ſhortening of it, as to GOD's infinite wiſdom and goodneſs ſhall ſeem beſt.

And let us always be mindful of that caution which our SAVIOUR gives to his diſciples, that they might always be in a due preparation for the coming of our LORD to judgment, Luke xxi. 34, 35, 36. "Take "heed to yourſelves, leſt at any time your hearts be "overcharged with ſurfeiting and drunkenneſs, and "the cares of this life, and ſo that day come upon "you unawares. For as a ſnare ſhall it come upon all "them that dwell upon the face of the whole earth. "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may "be accounted worthy to eſcape all theſe things that "ſhall come to paſs, and to ſtand before the Son of "man." This caution and counſel does proportionably hold, as to our preparation for any other evil day of affliction and ſuffering in this world; that we

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ſhould beware of ſenſuality, and an inordinate love to the things of this world, and care about them; becauſe theſe ſoften and effeminate our ſpirits, and render them unfit for the day of adverſity: and that we ſhould "watch and pray;" becauſe theſe are the beſt preparations againſt an evil day, and perhaps may prevent it, at leaſt as to ourſelves, if GOD think it fit for us, and count us worthy to eſcape it.

To conclude then this whole diſcourſe. In all our fears and troubles, in all afflictions and adverſities that may happen to us in this world, let us "encourage "ourſelves in the LORD our GOD, the Father of mer-"cy, and the GOD of all conſolation;" and in his bleſſed Son JESUS CHRIST our LORD, "the high "prieſt of our profeſſion, and the author and finiſher "of our faith; whom GOD hath exalted far above all "principalities and powers, and every name that is "named, not only in this world, but in that which "is to come, and hath given him to be head over all "things to his church;" remembring that we and all our concernments are in the hands of his providence, where we are infinitely ſafer than in any counſel and wiſdom of our own. And if after all, it be the will of GOD to exerciſe any of us with more than ordinary trials, "to lay affliction upon our loins, and "to ſuffer men to ride over our heads," as the pſalmiſt expreſſeth it; let us, as St. Peter exhorts, "com-"mit the keeping of our ſouls to him in well-doing, "as to a faithful creator, who is able to keep that "which is committed to him, and to preſerve us to "his heavenly kingdom;" which let us all humbly and earneſtly beg, for the ſake of JESUS CHRIST: "to whom with the Father and the holy Ghoſt, be "all honour and glory, might, majeſty, and domi-"nion, now and for ever."

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Of the nature of faith in general.

HEB. xi. 6.

But without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe GOD.

BEfore I come to the words themſelves, in order to our better underſtanding of them, we will take into conſideration the deſign of this epiſtle, that ſo we may ſee more clearly the relation that theſe words have to the foregoing diſcourſe. Who the penman of this epiſtle was I ſhall not tell you, becauſe I do not know, nor is it much material to know it; but whoever wrote it, he had this very good deſign in the writing of it, to perſuade the Jews to hold faſt the profeſſion of the goſpel, notwithſtanding all the ſufferings and perſecutions it expoſed them to. And to this purpoſe he ſhews at large, what prerogatives the goſpel hath above the legal adminiſtration. "The law was given by the diſpoſition of an-"gels, in the hand of a mediator," that is, Moſes: but the goſpel is revealed to us by the Son of GOD; a perſon not only above Moſes, who was a mere man; but above angels. The goſpel is the ſubſtance and reality of the types and ceremonies, and the very good things themſelves, that were obſcurely repreſented by thoſe ſhadows. It is a teſtament eſtabliſhed upon better promiſes, the clear promiſes of eternal life, which were but darkly revealed in the old teſtament, that being eſtabliſhed either ſolely or principally upon temporal promiſes: and it is a perfect and complete diſpenſation, that hath in it all things requiſite

SERM. CCXIX. The firſt ſermon on this text.

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to attain it's end, and therefore ſhall never ſtand in need of any farther change or alteration. Theſe are the heads of thoſe arguments which the author of this epiſtle does largely diſcourſe upon.

Now the goſpel having in theſe reſpects the advantage of the legal diſpenſation, the apoſtle doth all along in this epiſtle earneſtly exhort the Jews to a conſtant profeſſion and ſtedfaſt belief of the goſpel, and not to turn back from chriſtianity to judaiſm, which was a far leſs perfect inſtitution. Ch. ii. 1. "Therefore we ought to give the more earneſt heed to the "things which we have heard, leſt at any time we "ſhould let them ſlip, παραῤῥυῶμεν, leſt we ſhould "fall away," ſo the word may be rendered. And ch. iii. 12. "Take heed, brethren, leſt there be in "any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing "from the living GOD." And ch. iv. 1. "Let us "therefore fear, leſt a promiſe being left us of entring into his reſt, any of you ſhould ſeem to come "ſhort of it." And ch. x. 23. "Let us hold faſt the "profeſſion of our faith without wavering."

After which he declares the danger of apoſtaſy, or falling off from the belief and profeſſion of the goſpel which they had entertained: v. 26. "for if we ſin "wilfully after we have received the knowledge of "the truth, there remaineth no more ſacrifice for ſin." He tells them they would be ſhrewdly tempted to apoſtaſy by the reproaches, afflictions and perſecutions that they would meet withal; but the promiſes of the goſpel were ſufficient to ſupport and bear up good men under theſe, if they were but firmly perſuaded of the truth of them; and though they did not for the preſent receive the things promiſed, yet a firm belief of them would carry them through all ſufferings, and make them hold out under them. "The juſt ſhall live "*by* faith." v. 38. And

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And having mentioned the power of faith, that is, of a confident perſuaſion of the truth and reality of the promiſes of the goſpel to ſupport men under ſufferings, he gives an account how faith uſes to have this influence, ver. 1. "faith is the ſubſtance of things "hoped for," ſo we render the word ὑπόστασις; but it might be much better rendered, both according to the frequent uſe of it in the ſeptuagint, and in the new teſtament, "a confidence of things hoped "for," that is, a confident expectation of things hoped for, or a firm perſuaſion that our hopes will not be fruſtrated. And as this is more agreeable to the ſcope and deſign of the apoſtle, ſo likewiſe to the common acceptation of this word in the new teſtament, for which I will appeal to two places. 2 Cor. ix. 4. "That we be not put to ſhame in this confi- "dence of boaſting," ἐν τῇ ὑποστάσει ταύτῃ. The other text is in this epiſt. ch. iii. 14. "that we hold "faſt the beginning of our confidence, τὴν ἀρχὴν ὑποστάσεως, which is of the very ſame ſenſe with παῤῥησία, at the 6th ver. "If we hold faſt the con- "fidence παῤῥησίαν, and rejoicing of the hope firm "unto the end. And the evidence of things not ſeen, "ἔλεγχον, the conviction," as being convinced, or perſuaded of the truth of thoſe things, for which we have no ocular or ſenſible demonſtration. Now if faith in the promiſes of the goſpel do perſuade us and give us ſatisfaction that we ſhall receive a reward, which will outweigh and countervail our preſent ſufferings, then faith is likely to ſupport us under ſufferings.

And that this is no ſtrange thing which the apoſtle ſpeaks of faith, he ſhews that in all ages faith hath been the principle of all holy and heroick actions. By it the elders obtained a good report; it is that which

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which made the holy men of the old teſtament ſo famous; and this he proves throughout this chapter, by a large induction of particular inſtances, in which we ſee the power of faith, the wonderful effects of it, and the mighty works it hath done in the world.

But becauſe he ſaid before that "faith is the evi- "dence," or conviction "of things not ſeen," as well as "a confident expectation of things hoped for," before he comes to inſtance in the effects of faith upon particular perſons in the old teſtament, he proves it to be "the evidence of things not ſeen," that is, being convinced and perſuaded of things of which we have no ſenſible and ocular demonſtration, ver. 3. "Through faith we underſtood that the worlds were "framed by the word of GOD, ſo that the things "which are ſeen, were not made of things which do "appear;" that is, though we were not preſent at the making of the world, nor did ſee it framed; yet we are ſatisfied, and do believe that it was made by the powerful word of GOD, and that all thoſe things which we ſee were not produced out of things which do now appear, but either immediately out of nothing, or a dark confuſed chaos.

And having thus proved that we may be perſuaded of things we do not ſee, of things paſt, or future, he comes to the particular inſtances of the holy men of the old teſtament, in whom the power of faith did appear. He begins with Abel, who being perſuaded of the being of GOD, and the perfection and excellency of the divine nature, and conſequently that he was worthy to be ſerved with the beſt, by virtue of this faith, "offered up to GOD a more ex- "cellent ſacrifice than Cain." The ſecond inſtance is in Enoch, who being perſuaded of the being of GOD, and of his goodneſs to reward them that ſerve him,

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was a righteous man, and ſtudious to pleaſe GOD; and as a reward of this faith and obedience, "GOD "tranſlated him, that he ſhould not ſee death;" upon which the apoſtle aſſumes, ver. 6. "but with- "out faith, it is impoſſible to pleaſe GOD." As if he had ſaid, unleſs a man do believe, and be perſuaded of ſome principles, it is impoſſible any man ſhould be religious, or endeavour to do any thing that is pleaſing or acceptable to GOD: for religion, and the ſervice of GOD, and an endeavour to pleaſe him, do ſuppoſe at leaſt that I believe and am perſuaded of theſe two things, of the being, and of the goodneſs of GOD, that there is ſuch a being as I ſerve and ſeek to pleaſe, and that his goodneſs is ſuch, that it will not be in vain to ſerve him, he will not let me be a loſer by it.

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And that here by pleaſing, we are to underſtand in general the performing any action of religion, is evident from the equivalent terms which are uſed in the next words, "for he that cometh to GOD, muſt "believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them "that ſeek him;" where "coming to GOD," and "ſeeking of him," are of the ſame importance with pleaſing him. Now to come to GOD, and ſeek him, in ſcripture phraſe ſignify the ſum of religion, it being uſual in the language of ſcripture, to expreſs the whole of religion by any eminent principle, or part, or effect of it; as by the knowledge, remembrance, or fear of GOD in the old teſtament; by the love of him, and faith in him, in the new, by coming to him, ſeeking him, calling upon his name, and pleaſing of him.

Now that "coming to GOD," and "ſeeking him," are of the ſame importance here with "pleaſing of "him," will be clear to any that conſider the apoſtle's

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ſtle's reaſoning here in the text, which ſuppoſeth theſe to be the ſame, otherwiſe there would be no force in his argument. For the propoſition which he proves is, that "without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe GOD." The argument he uſeth is this, if "every one that "comes to GOD muſt believe that he is," &c. then "without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe him;" but "every one that comes to GOD, muſt believe that "he is." Now unleſs "coming to GOD," and "ſeeking him," be the ſame thing with "pleaſing "him," this would be no good argument: for there would be four terms in it; but if theſe phraſes be made equivalent, then the argument is good. Thus, if "every one that comes to GOD," that is that will "pleaſe him, muſt believe that he is, &c." then "without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe him:" but "every one that comes to GOD," that is, that will "pleaſe him, muſt believe that he is, and that he is "a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him," or "that endeavour to pleaſe him:" therefore "with-"out faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe him."

Which propoſition doth not only ſignify that faith is neceſſary to religion, and a condition without which it cannot be; but implies likewiſe, that it is a cauſe or principle of it: not only the foundation upon which all religion muſt be built; but the fountain from whence it ſprings. For this I take to be implied in the words, not only that there can be no religion unleſs we believe a GOD; but ſuppoſing this truth firmly believed, that there is a GOD, it will have a great influence upon men to make them religious. For the apoſtle having before ſpoken of the power of faith upon Abel and Enoch, that it put them upon "pleaſing GOD" he aſſumes in the next words, "but without faith, &c." As if he had ſaid,

ſaid, that you may know what was the principle of their religion, of their holineſs and obedience, let us imagine that a man ſhould believe nothing concerning the being of a GOD, or the bleſſedneſs of thoſe who ſerve him; what would be the iſſue? Why this certainly, there would be no religion, no ſuch thing as ſerving of GOD, or endeavouring to pleaſe him: for unleſs we believe that he is, and that he will reward thoſe who ſeek to pleaſe him, it is impoſſible, that is, it is unreaſonable to think men ſhould attempt to pleaſe him. So that faith is the cauſe and principle of religion, it is the thing, *quo poſito, ponitur effectus; & quo ſublato, tollitur*; do but ſuppoſe and admit that a man truly believes there is a GOD; and he will ſeek to pleaſe him: but if you ſuppoſe a man believes no ſuch thing; he will caſt off all religion. This is the plain meaning of the words; not as ſome have thought, that without faith a man may perform religious actions, but then they would not be accepted, or pleaſing to GOD: but that which the apoſtle means is, without faith it is impoſſible there ſhould be any religion: not that religious acts ſhould be performed in an acceptable manner; as if Cain had offered as good a ſacrifice as Abel, only faith made the difference: but Cain did not believe, was not perſuaded of the being of GOD and his excellency, therefore thought to put off GOD with any thing; Abel believed, and did offer a more excellent ſacrifice, not more excellent becauſe it was mixed with faith, but it was more excellent in itſelf. SERM. CCXIX.

The obſervation therefore from theſe words is this, that faith is one great principle of all religious actions.

In the handling of this, I ſhall endeavour,

Firſt, To fix and ſettle the true notion of faith, whereby we may come to underſtand the general nature of it.

Second-

Secondly, to confirm the truth of the propoſition.

Thirdly, draw ſome inferences from hence.

Firſt, to ſettle and fix the true notion of faith, whereby we may come to underſtand the general nature of it. I find that moſt who write upon this ſubject have marvellouſly puzzled themſelves with the various acceptations of this word πίστις, and the verb πιστεύειν, inſomuch that ſome have undertaken to enumerate above twenty diſtinct ſignifications of this word. I cannot find ſo many, it may be others may: but hereby, inſtead of clearing the notion of faith, they have involved it, and made it more intricate, and have made men believe, that it is a notion very remote from common underſtanding; whereas there is not any word that is in common uſe, that is more plainly and eaſy, and which any one may underſtand better than this of faith and believing.

Therefore in the explication of it, I ſhall attend to the uſe of it in common ſpeech, and in all authors as well prophane as ſacred; and I ſhall not guide my ſelf by terms of art, which have been received in the ſchools, and have confounded the meaning of words, by diſtorting them from the common and received uſe of them; but ſhall govern myſelf by the nature of things to which this word in common uſe is applied.

I ſhall remove two acceptations of it which are leſs uſual, and then fix the common and general notion of it, to which all the other more particular ſignifications may be referred. The two leſs uſual acceptations are theſe.

Firſt, it is ſometimes put for the particular grace or virtue, which is called fidelity, or faithfulneſs in our promiſes and contracts; and in this ſenſe it is ſometimes uſed in common diſcourſe, and in all ſorts of writers. I ſhall only mention a text or two where

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it is ſo taken. Matt. xxiii. 23. " And have omitted SERM. " the weightier things of the law, judgment, and CCXIX. " mercy, and faith," that is, fidelity. And Rom. iii. 3. with relation to GOD, " ſhall their unbelief make " the faith of GOD of none effect?" that is, his faithfulneſs in his promiſes. Tit. ii. 13. " Not purloining, but ſhewing all good fidelity," πίστιν πᾶσαν, all faith.

Secondly, it is ſometimes put for ſpiritual gifts, and particularly the gifts of miracles, which were wrought by the power of faith, Rom. xii. 3. " According as " GOD hath dealt to every man the meaſure of faith;" that is, of ſpiritual gifts, of propheſying, or miniſtry, or exhortation, as it is explained afterward. 1 Cor. xii. 9. " To another is given faith by the ſame Spirit," that is, a power of miracles in general, as learned interpreters think. Nor doth that which is added afterward, that " to another is given the working of miracles," prejudice this interpretation; for ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων, " the operation of powers," which we render " of " miracles," ſeems to ſignify ſome ſpecial ſort of miracles, not the power of miracles in general. And this ſeems, to be favoured by the acceptation of it in the next chap. ver. 2. " and though I have all faith, ſo " that I could remove mountains;" where faith is undoubtedly taken for the power of miracles.

Theſe being removed, as very alien and remote from the common and uſual acceptation of the word, I come now to fix the general notion of faith, to which all other acceptations of it may eaſily be reduced; and it is this.

Faith is a perſuaſion of the mind concerning any thing; concerning the truth of any propoſition, concerning the exiſtence, or futurition, or lawfulneſs, or convenience, or poſſibility, or goodneſs of any thing,

or

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or the contrary; or concerning the credit of a perſon, or the contrary. And this notion is not only agreeable to the proper notion of the word πίστις, which comes from πείθω, to perſuade, but is warranted from the common uſe of it in this latitude. It is ordinary for men to ſay, they believe, or are perſuaded, ſuch a propoſition is true or falſe, ſuch a thing is or is not, ſuch an event will be or will not be, that ſuch an action is lawful or unlawful, ſuch a thing is good or bad, convenient or inconvenient, poſſible or impoſſible to be done; or that they believe ſuch a perſon, or do not believe him. And I could ſhew from ſcripture, that believing is applied to all theſe matters, and many more; I will only inſtance in one or two.

That faith is frequently uſed for the perſuaſion of the truth of a doctrine, or of the veracity of God or Christ, I ſhall not need to produce any texts, there are ſo many.

That faith is uſed for a perſuaſion of the lawfulneſs of an action, the xivth chap. to the Romans doth abundantly teſtify. Ver. 2. "One believeth that he "may eat all things;" that is, is perſuaded in his mind, that all ſorts of meat are lawful without diſtinction. Ver. 22. "Haſt thou faith?" that is, art thou perſuaded or ſatisfied in thy mind of the lawfulneſs of thoſe indifferent things he had been ſpeaking of? Ver. 23. "He that doubteth is damned if he eat, becauſe "he eateth not of faith: for whatſoever is not of "faith, is ſin;" that is, whatſoever is not done with the perſuaſion and ſatisfaction of our minds, that we may lawfully do it, "is ſin." I ſhall trouble you with no more inſtances.

Now this being the general notion of faith, that it is a perſuaſion of the mind concerning any thing, from hence, by a metonymy, it comes to be put for the argument

gument whereby this perſuaſion is wrought in us. Hence it is, that among the rhetoricians πίστις are any kind of argument or proof which orators make uſe of to perſuade men; and there is one place in the new teſtament, where πίστις ſeems to be uſed in this ſenſe, or very near it, Acts xvii. 31. "becauſe he hath "appointed a day in which he will judge the world, "&c. whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men, "in that he hath raiſed him from the dead, πίστιν "παρασχὼν πᾶσιν, having offered faith to all men;" that is, having given us this argument for the proof of it, "that he raiſed CHRIST from the dead." SERM. CCXIX.

Sometimes it is put for the object of this perſuaſion, or the matter or thing whereof we are perſuaded. And thus frequently in the new teſtament, the goſpel, which is the object of our faith, the thing which we believe, is called faith. And thus you find it uſed in that phraſe of "obedience to the faith," that is, to the goſpel, Acts vi. 7. Rom. i. 5. xvi. 26. And in this ſenſe faith, that is, the goſpel, is frequently oppoſed to the diſpenſation of the law, Rom. iii. 27, 31. and x. 16. Gal. i. 23. "he that perſecuted us in "times paſt, now preacheth the faith which once he "deſtroyed." Gal. iii. 2. the hearing of the goſpel is called "the hearing of faith;" ver. 23. "before "faith came;" and ver. 25. "but after that faith is "come." Eph. iv. 5. "There is one faith," that is, one goſpel, which we believe, 1 Tim. iv. 6. "Nou-"riſhed up in the words of faith, and of good doc-"trine."

The oppoſites to faith are unbelief and credulity. Unbelief, which is a not being perſuaded of a thing, is the deficient extreme; or doubting, if it prevail to a degree of unbelief: and credulity, which is an eaſineſs to believe things without any probable argument

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to induce our perſuaſion, is the redundant extreme. The ſeat or ſubject of faith is the mind, or the heart, as the ſcripture uſually calls it. "With the heart man "believes," that is, with the ſoul: for I do not underſtand any real diſtinction of faculties; but if you will diſtinguiſh them, the proper ſeat of this perſuaſion is the underſtanding; the immediate effect of it is upon the will; by which it works upon the affections, and the life.

And faith in this general notion is not oppoſed to error, and knowledge, and opinion: but comprehends all theſe under it. For if a man be perſuaded of that which is falſe, he "believes a lie," as the ſcripture expreſſeth it; a man may be certainly perſuaded of a thing, that is, firmly believe it, which is knowledge; a man may be probably perſuaded of a thing, that is, believe it with ſome diffidence and uncertainty, and that is opinion.

But for our better underſtanding of this general notion of faith, we will take into conſideration theſe four things.

I. The cauſe of it, or the argument whereby it is wrought.

II. The degrees of it, and the difference of them.

III. The natural efficacy and operation of it.

IV. The ſeveral kinds of it.

I. We will conſider the cauſe of faith, or the argument whereby it is wrought. Now all the arguments whereby faith may be wrought in us, that is, a perſuaſion of any thing, will I think fall under one of theſe four heads; ſenſe, experience, reaſon drawn from the thing, or the authority and teſtimony of ſome perſon.

1. Senſe. Hence it is commonly ſaid that ſeeing is believing, that is, one of the beſt arguments to perſuade us of any thing. That faith may be wrought by

by this argument, appears both from the nature of the thing, nothing being more apt to perſuade us of any thing than our ſenſes; and from ſeveral expreſſions in ſcripture. I will inſtance in one for all, John xx. 8. "then went in alſo the other diſciple into the "ſepulchre, and he ſaw, and believed." And whereas ſcripture oppoſeth faith to ſight, as 2 Cor. v. 7. "we "walk by faith, and not by ſight:" Heb. xi. 15. "it is the evidence of things not ſeen;" we are to underſtand that only concerning a belief of the things of another world, which are futurities, and inviſible, which the apoſtle is there ſpeaking of; or of things which are of the ſame nature with theſe, as things paſt: not but that a man may very well be induced to believe a thing by his ſenſes. SERM. CCXIX.

2. Experience; which though it may be ſenſible, and then it is the ſame argument with ſenſe; yet ſometimes it is not, and then it is an argument diſtinct from it. As for example, a man may by experience be perſuaded or induced to believe this propoſition, that his will is free, that he can do this, or not do it; which is a better argument than a demonſtration to the contrary, if there could be one.

3. Reaſons drawn from the thing; which may either be neceſſary and concluding, or elſe only probable, and plauſible.

4. The authority and teſtimony of ſome credible perſon. Now two things give authority and credit to the relation, or teſtimony, or aſſertion of a perſon concerning any thing; ability, and integrity. Ability, if he can be preſumed to have a competent knowledge of what he relates, or aſſerts, or teſtifies; and integrity, if he may be preſumed to be honeſt in his relation, and free from any deſign or will to deceive. And to theſe heads, I think, all arguments of belief may be reduced.

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II. The ſecond thing to be conſidered is the degrees of faith, and the difference of them. And that there are degrees, I take for granted, though I ſhall afterwards have occaſion to prove it in a divine faith; and theſe depend perfectly upon the capacity of the perſon that believes, or is perſuaded. Now the capacity or incapacity of perſons are infinitely various, and not to be reduced to theory; but ſuppoſing a competent capacity in the perſon, then the degrees of faith or perſuaſion take their difference from the arguments, or motives, or inducements which are uſed to perſuade. Where ſenſe is the argument, there is the higheſt and firmeſt degree of faith or perſuaſion. Next to that is experience, which is beyond any argument or reaſon from the thing. The faith or perſuaſion which is wrought in us by reaſons drawn from the thing, the degrees of it are as the reaſons are: if they be neceſſary and concluding, it is firm and certain in it's kind; if only probable, according to the degrees of probability, it hath more or leſs of doubting mixed with it. Laſtly, the faith which is wrought in us by teſtimony or authority of a perſon, takes it's degrees from the credit of the perſon, that is, his ability and integrity. Now becauſe "all men are liars," that is, either may deceive or be deceived, their teſtimony partakes of their infirmity, and ſo doth the degree of perſuaſion wrought by it: but GOD being both infallible and true, and conſequently it being impoſſible that he ſhould either deceive, or be deceived, his teſtimony begets the firmeſt perſuaſion and the higheſt degree of faith in it's kind. But then it is to be conſidered, that there not being a revelation of a revelation *in infinitum*; that this is a divine teſtimony and revelation, we can only have rational aſſurance; and the degree of the faith or perſuaſion which

is

wrought by a divine teſtimony, will be according SERM. CCXIX.
) the ſtrength of the arguments which we have to
erſuade us that ſuch a teſtimony is divine.

III. For the efficacy or operation of faith, we are
) conſider that the things we may believe or be per-
uaded of, are of two ſorts. Either, 1. they are ſuch
s do not concern me; and then the mind reſts in a
aked and ſimple belief of them, and a faith or per-
ſaſion of ſuch things has no effect upon me; but is
pt to have, if ever it happen that the matter do con-
ern me: or elſe, 2. the thing I believe or am per-
uaded of doth concern me; and then it hath ſeveral
ffects, according to the nature of the thing I am per-
uaded of, or the degree of the perſuaſion, or the ca-
acity of the perſon that believes or is perſuaded. If
he thing believed be of great moment, the effect of
he faith is proportionable, *cæteris paribus*; and ſo
ccording to the degree of the perſuaſion: but if the
erſon be indiſpoſed to the proper effects of ſuch a
erſuaſion by the power of contrary habits, as it often
appens, the effect will be obtained with more diffi-
ulty, and may poſſibly be totally defeated, by caſt-
ng off the perſuaſion: for while it remains, it will
perate, and endeavour, and ſtrive to work its pro-
per effect. For example, a man may believe that wine
is very pernicious to him; and yet a ſtrong inclina-
tion to it may render it very difficult for this perſua-
ſion to work it's proper effect upon him, which is to
leave off wine, and may at length wholly defeat it, by
furniſhing him with ſome colour of argument that
may perſuade him otherwiſe.

IV. For the kinds of faith they are ſeveral, accord-
ing to the variety of objects or things believed. I
ſhall reduce them all under theſe two general heads.

1. Faith is either civil or human, under which I

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comprehend the perſuaſion of things moral, and natural, and political, and the like: or,

2. Divine and religious, that is, a perſuaſion of things that concern religion. I know not whether theſe terms be proper, nor am I very ſolicitous, becauſe I know none fitter, and tell you what I mean by them.

The firſt kind of faith, concerning things human and civil, I ſhall not ſpeak of, it being beſide my deſign.

The ſecond, which I call a religious and divine faith, comprehends three things under it, which are diſtinctly to be conſidered.

1. A perſuaſion of the principles of natural religion, which are known by the light of nature, as the exiſtence of a GOD, the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate.

2. A perſuaſion of things ſupernatural and revealed.

3. A perſuaſion of ſupernatural revelation. Theſe I deſign fully to handle. Thus I have prepared materials for a large diſcourſe; which though it be neceſſary, is, I am ſenſible, but too tedious, and yet poſſibly more tedious to me than you.

SERMON CCXX.

Of a religious and divine faith.

HEB. xi. 6.

But without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe GOD.

IN my laſt diſcourſe I came to treat of a religious and divine faith, which, I told you, comprehends under it three things, which I now proceed to conſider diſtinctly.

Firſt,

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Firſt, A perſuaſion of the principles of natural religion, which are known by the light of nature.

Secondly, a perſuaſion of things ſupernatural and revealed.

Thirdly, a perſuaſion of ſupernatural revelation.

Firſt, a perſuaſion of the principles of natural religion, ſuch as the light of nature could diſcover; ſuch are the exiſtence of GOD, the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate. The things to be enquired concerning this kind of faith are theſe.

I. Whether this be truly and properly called faith.

II. What are the arguments whereby it is wrought.

III. Whether it admit of degrees or not, and what differences are obſervable in them.

IV. What are the proper and genuine effects of it.

V. In what ſenſe it may be ſaid to be divine faith.

I. Whether it may truly and properly be called faith, or not? If the general notion of faith which I have fixed before, viz. that it is a perſuaſion of the mind concerning any thing, be a true notion of faith, then there is no doubt but this may as properly be called faith, as any thing can be; becauſe a man may be perſuaded in his mind concerning theſe things, that there is a GOD, that our ſouls are immortal, that there is another ſtate after this life.

But beſides this, if the ſcripture ſpeaks properly, as we have reaſon to believe it does, eſpecially when it treats profeſſedly of any thing, as the apoſtle here does, then this queſtion is fully decided: for it is evident to any one that will but read this verſe, out of which I have taken my text, that the apoſtle doth here in this place ſpeak of this kind of faith, that is, a belief or perſuaſion of the principles of natural religion. For after the apoſtle had ſaid, that "without faith, it is "impoſſible to pleaſe GOD;" he immediately inſtanceth

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ſtanceth in the belief of the principles of natural religion, as neceſſary to the pleaſing of GOD, that is, to make a man religious. "He that cometh to GOD, "muſt believe that he is;" there is the exiſtence of GOD, the firſt principle of natural religion: "and "that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek "him;" which implies the other two, the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate; for if good men ſhall be rewarded, there muſt be a ſubject capable of ſuch rewards, which brings in the immortality of the ſoul; and there muſt be a ſeaſon for theſe rewards, which becauſe they are ſeldom beſtowed in this world, there muſt be a ſeaſon when they ſhall, which brings in a future ſtate after this life. So that whoever denies that a perſuaſion of theſe principles of natural religion may properly be called faith, he quarrels with the apoſtle, and does not correct me, but the ſcriptures.

II. What are the arguments whereby this faith or perſuaſion of theſe principles of natural religion is wrought? You may remember that I reduced all thoſe arguments whereby any kind of faith or perſuaſion is wrought in us, to theſe four heads; ſenſe, experience, reaſons drawn from the thing, and the teſtimony or authority of ſome perſon. Now a faith or perſuaſion of theſe principles cannot be wrought in us by ſenſe: for "no man hath ſeen GOD at any "time," and being a pure ſpirit, he cannot be the object of any corporeal ſenſe. Nor can the ſoul, or any mode of it's exiſtence, fall under any of our ſenſes; nor a future ſtate; becauſe ſenſe is only of things preſent. Nor can it be wrought in us merely by experience: for no man can conclude from any thing he experienceth in himſelf, that there is a GOD, unleſs he be firſt perſuaded of it by other arguments: and the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate, are things which

which none in this life can experience. Nor can the authority or teſtimony of any perſon be the argument that induceth that perſuaſion. Not any human authority: for theſe things are of ſuch conſequence, and ſo much depends upon them, that is, the belief of them puts us upon ſo many things, which men would not do if they did not believe them, as particularly the venturing of our lives upon the account of religion, and all our worldly intereſts, if occaſion call for it; that it were a fond thing to take matters of ſuch moment and importance upon any man's bare word, without other aſſurance of them. Nor can the teſtimony or authority of GOD be the argument that perſuades me of the exiſtance of a GOD. I grant, that for the other two, the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate, it is an excellent, and may be a ſufficient argument. Though that theſe may be proved likewiſe by other arguments without a revelation, is evident in the heathens, who by the light of nature did aſſent to them without a revelation. But a divine revelation cannot poſſibly be an argument inducing me to believe the exiſtence of a GOD for this plain reaſon; becauſe a divine revelation can be no argument to any that is not perſuaded that it is a divine revelation: but before I can be perſuaded that any revelation is from GOD, I muſt be perſuaded there is a GOD; and if ſo, there is no need of this argument to prove to me that there is one: and therefore you do not find it any where revealed in all the ſcripture, that there is a GOD. The ſcripture often declares that JEHOVAH is "the true and living GOD," and that "beſides him there is no other:" but it doth not reveal, but every where ſuppoſe that there is one.

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It remains then, that it muſt be another kind of argument whereby we muſt be perſuaded of the exiſtence

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iſtence of a God, and that is by ſuch reaſons as may be drawn from things themſelves to perſuade us hereof; as either from the notion and idea which we have of a God, that he is a being that hath all perfections, whereof neceſſary exiſtence is one, and conſequently that he muſt be; or elſe from the univerſal conſent of all nations, and the generality of perſons agreeing in this apprehenſion, which cannot be attributed reaſonably to any other cauſe, than to impreſſions ſtamped upon our underſtanding by God himſelf; or (which is moſt plain of all) from this viſible frame of the world, which we cannot, without great violence to our underſtandings, impute to any other cauſe than a being endowed with infinite goodneſs, and power, and wiſdom, which is what we call God.

As for the other two principles of natural religion, the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate; after we believe a God, we may be perſuaded of theſe from divine revelation; and that doth give us the higheſt and firmeſt aſſurance of them in the reſurrection of Christ from the dead. Yet I do not find but that theſe alſo are rather ſuppoſed, than expreſly revealed in the bible. Indeed the immortality of the ſoul may be infer'd from ſeveral places of ſcripture, and the tenor of the whole bible: and ſo a future ſtate, which as for the thing itſelf, ſeems to be ſuppoſed as a thing acknowledged by natural light; only the ſcripture hath revealed the circumſtances of it more particularly to us, and given us higher aſſurance of the thing: but if there were no revelation, men might be perſuaded of theſe; and ſo the heathens were by arguments drawn partly from the operations of the ſoul which would almoſt perſuade any man that the ſoul is immortal; it being altogether unimaginable how a principle that is nothing elſe but matter, can either

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understand, or determine itself by it's own will; all SERM. CCXX.
the motions of matter that we know of, or can imagine, being necessary: and partly from the justice and goodness of God. The consideration of God's goodness would persuade a man, that as he made all things very good, so he made them of the longest duration they were capable of: and the justice of God would easily induce a man to believe, seeing the providence of God doth generally in this life deal promiscuously with good and bad men, that there shall be a day which will make a difference, and every man shall receive according to his works.

But I do not intend to insist upon these arguments; all that I design is, to shew what kind of arguments do work a faith or persuasion in the mind concerning these principles of natural religion; and they are reasons drawn from the thing.

And it is not always necessary to the working of this faith or persuasion, that these reasons should necessarily, yea, or truly conclude the principle to be believed: if they do it probably, and it appear so to me, it is enough to beget a persuasion in me of such a thing. There are many men entertain the greatest truths, and are firmly persuaded of them, upon an incompetent argument, and such as might persuade them of any thing else as well; and such persons, if they have capacity and understanding, they are rather happy than wise in their religion. It falls out well that they happen to be in the right; for they might have been in the wrong upon the same terms. But if the persons who believe the principles of religion on insufficient arguments, and their belief have a real effect upon them, as it will, if it be true and permanent; if they be ignorant, and such as want the ordinary advantages of improving their knowledge,

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they are wiſe enough; that is, they are as wiſe as God's providence hath made them, and the circumſtances of their education, and the condition of their life will let them be.

The III. thing to be enquired is, whether this faith or perſuaſion of the principles of natural religion admit degrees, or not; and what differences are obſervable in them. That it does admit degrees, that is, that a man may be more or leſs perſuaded of the truth of theſe principles, is evident from the heathens; ſome of whom did yield a more firm and unſhaken aſſent to them; others entertained them with a more faint perſuaſion of them, eſpecially of the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate, about which moſt of them had many qualms and doubts. Of all the heathens, Socrates ſeems to have had the trueſt and firmeſt perſuaſion of theſe things; which he did not only teſtify in words, but by the conſtancy, and calmneſs, and ſedate courage which he manifeſted at his death. Indeed in his diſcourſe before his death, he ſays, "he did not know whether his ſoul ſhall re-"main after his body, and whether there be a hap-"pineſs reſerved for good men in another world: "but he thought ſo, and had ſuch hopes of it, that "he was very willing to venture his life upon theſe "hopes." Which words, though they ſeem to be ſpoke doubtingly, as the manner of the academy was; yet conſidering his manner of ſpeaking, which was modeſt, and not peremptory and dogmatical, they ſignify as great a confidence as he had of any thing, and they are high expreſſions of aſſurance. For we may believe that the man who dies for any thing, how modeſtly ſoever he may expreſs himſelf, is very well aſſured of the truth of it. So that this faith and perſuaſion admits of degrees, the difference whereof is to

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be reſolved partly into the capacity of the perſons who believe; and partly into the ſtrength, or at leaſt appearance of ſtrength in the arguments whereby it is wrought. SERM. CCXX.

The IV. thing to be enquired is, what are the proper and genuine effects of this faith or perſuaſion. Now that, in a word, is natural religion, which conſiſts in apprehenſions of God ſuitable to his nature, and affections towards him ſuitable to theſe apprehenſions, and actions ſuitable to both. He that believes there is ſuch a being in the world as God, that is, one infinitely good, and wiſe, and powerful, and juſt, and holy, and (in a word) clothed with all excellency, will have a great eſteem and reverence for him, and love to him, which he will teſtify in thoſe outward expreſſions of reſpect which we call worſhip. He that believes that this being is the original of all good, that he made the world, and all the creatures in it, and preſerves and governs them, he will depend upon him, and ſeek to him for every good thing, and acknowledge him for the author of them; which brings in prayer and thankſgiving. He that believes that he owes his being to God, and all the bleſſings of his life, will think it reaſonable that he ſhould be at his diſpoſal, will be willing to be governed by his laws, and ready to ſubmit to his pleaſure; which brings in obedience and ſubmiſſion to the will of God. He that believes there is another life after this, wherein men ſhall be rewarded or puniſhed, according as they have demeaned themſelves well or ill in this world, he will be encouraged to piety and virtue, and afraid to do any thing which his own reaſon tells him is diſpleaſing to the Deity, as he cannot but believe every thing is, that is contrary to the nature of God, or the perfection of his own nature, or the good order

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and happineſs of the world; which brings in temperance, and juſtice, and all other real virtues. And that the belief of theſe principles had this effect upon ſeveral of the heathens, to make them in a good degree religious and virtuous, I doubt not; the moral and honeſt lives of many of them give real teſtimony of this; which natural religion and morality of theirs, how far it may avail them for their good, we are not concerned to determine. This we are ſure of, that it will make their condition more tolerable in another world, and if they fall under condemnation, it will mitigate and allay their miſery.

V. In what ſenſe this faith or perſuaſion of the principles of natural religion may be ſaid to be divine. In theſe two reſpects.

1. In reſpect of the object of it, or matters to be believed, which are divine, and do immediately concern religion, in oppoſition to that which I call a civil and human faith, which is of ſuch things as do not immediately concern GOD and religion.

2. In reſpect of the divine effects of it, which are to make men religious and like GOD. And a faith may as properly be ſaid to be divine in reſpect of the object of it, as in reſpect of the argument whereby it is wrought: ſo that a faith of the principles of natural religion is as truly divine, though it be not wrought in us by the arguments of divine teſtimony and authority, as a faith of the matters of divine revelation contained in the holy ſcriptures: for why a faith may not as well be ſaid to be divine for it's relation to GOD as the object of it, as for it's relation to the teſtimony of GOD as the cauſe of it, I cannot underſtand.

Secondly, the ſecond ſort of faith, which I call divine or religious, is a perſuaſion of things ſupernaturally revealed, of things which are not known by natural

ural light, but by ſome more immediate manifeſta- SERM. CCXX.
tion and diſcovery from GOD. Thus we find our SAVIOUR, Matt. xvi. 15, 16, 17. oppoſeth divine revelation to the diſcovery of natural reaſon and light. He aſks his diſciples whom they believed him to be; "whom ſay ye that I am? and Simon Peter answered and ſaid, thou art the CHRIST (that is, the "Meſſias) the Son of the living GOD. And JESUS "anſwered and ſaid unto him, bleſſed art thou, Simon Barjona; for fleſh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee: but my Father which is in "heaven:" where a revelation or diſcovery from fleſh and blood is oppoſed to a revelation from GOD, "fleſh and blood" being a Hebrew phraſe or manner of ſpeaking, ſignifying a mere man, or ſomething merely human. So we find the phraſe uſed, Eph. vi. 12. "we wreſtle not againſt fleſh and blood, but againſt principalities, and powers, and ſpiritual wickedneſs;" that is, the enemies we are to contend with, are not only men but devils; and, which is nearer to our purpoſe, Gal. i. 16. where the apoſtle would expreſs to us, that he received not his commiſſion from men, but immediately from the LORD JESUS CHRIST; he tells us, that "when it pleaſeth "GOD, who ſeparated him from his mother's womb, "and called him by his grace, to reveal his Son in "him, that he might preach him among the heathen, "immediately he conferred not with fleſh and "blood;" the word is προσανεθέμην, "I did not "apply myſelf to fleſh and blood;" that is, I did not go to men to receive my commiſſion from them: for ſo he explains it in the next words, "neither went "I up to Jeruſalem, to them that were apoſtles be"fore me;" that is, I did not apply myſelf to the apoſtles, to derive any authority from them to preach

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the goſpel, becauſe he had no need of that, being called immediately by CHRIST to this work; which words are nothing elſe but a farther explication of what he had ſaid before, ver. 11, 12. "I certify you, "brethren, that the goſpel which was preached by "me, is not after man. For I neither received it of "man, neither was taught it, but by the revelation "of JESUS CHRIST." So accordingly here our SAVIOUR tells Peter that this truth, "that CHRIST was "the Meſſias, the Son of the living GOD, was not "revealed to him by man," nor by any mere human principle or teſtimony, "but by his Father "which was in heaven;" that is, by the teſtimony which GOD himſelf gave of him in the holy and divine goſpel which he taught, and thoſe miracles which he wrought in confirmation of it.

So that this kind of faith is a perſuaſion of ſuch things as are not known by natural light, or diſcover'd to us by men, but ſome way or other revealed by GOD; I ſay ſome way or other; for the ways of GOD's revealing and manifeſting himſelf to us are various and arbitrary. GOD may chooſe what ways he pleaſeth to diſcover himſelf to us by. So the apoſtle tells us, Heb. i. 1. "GOD, who at ſundry times, and "in divers manners ſpake in times paſt unto the fa-"thers by the prophets." GOD revealed himſelf at ſeveral times, by ſeveral ſteps and degrees; ſo in various manners; ſometimes by viſions, ſometimes by dreams, ſometimes by oracles, ſometimes by a ſpirit of propheſy, and ſometimes by a voice from heaven, ſometimes by a ſecret and gentle inſpiration. Now it matters not which of theſe ways GOD chuſeth to reveal himſelf to us, provided we have ſufficient evidence and grounds of aſſurance that the thing is revealed by GOD.

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As to us, theſe extraordinary ways of revelation are now ceaſed, and we have a fixed and ſtanding revelation, that is, the records of thoſe revelations which GOD formerly made to holy men; and this is the holy ſcriptures, or the Bible, which is a ſyſtem or collection of things ſupernaturally revealed.

Now if this faith be conſidered as reſtrained to a part of divine revelation, viz. the doctrine of the goſpel, revealed to the world by JESUS CHRIST, then it is properly chriſtian faith, which frequently in the new teſtament is called faith κατ' ἐξοχὴν, by way of excellency and eminency, this being the moſt eminent and perfect revelation which GOD hath made of himſelf to the world, which the apoſtle at the beginning of this epiſtle advanceth above all thoſe former revelations which GOD had made of himſelf to the fathers, thoſe being by his ſervants and miniſters, prophets and angels: "but in theſe laſt days GOD hath revealed "himſelf to us by his Son, whom he hath made heir "of all things," and advanced to a dignity above that of men or angels.

And with relation to this faith of the goſpel, Chriſtians are peculiarly and eminently called believers. 1 Theſſ. ii. 10. "You know how unblameably we "behaved ourſelves among you that believe," that is, among you Chriſtians. 2 Theſſ. i. 10. "When he "ſhall come to be glorified in his ſaints, and admir-"ed in all them that believe," meaning the Chriſtians that entertained the goſpel. And upon the ſame account the apoſtle calls the whole ſociety, or body of Chriſtians, "the houſhold of faith," Gal. vi. 10.

But now I am conſidering faith, not in this more narrow and reſtrained ſenſe, for a belief or perſuaſion of the doctrine of the goſpel; but in a more large and comprehenſive ſenſe, for a perſuaſion of all things that

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are ſupernaturally revealed, that is, of all things contained in the holy ſcriptures.

Now all the matters of divine revelation, which are contained in the book of holy ſcripture, may, I think, be reduced to one of theſe ſix heads.

1. They are either a hiſtory or relation of ſome perſon, or matter of fact: and a faith of the hiſtorical part of ſcripture is nothing elſe but a perſuaſion that thoſe narrations or relations are true. Or,

2. A prophecy or prediction of ſome event. Now a faith of the prophetical part of ſcripture, is a perſuaſion that the event foretold will certainly come to paſs. Or,

3. A doctrine. Such as are all thoſe propoſitions in ſcripture which declare to us the nature or properties of GOD, the nature and office of CHRIST, that he is the eternal Son of GOD, that is, true GOD, the Meſſias, or Saviour of the world, the king, prieſt, and prophet of his church, and the like. Now a faith of the doctrinal part of ſcripture, is a perſuaſion that thoſe propoſitions, which contain theſe doctrines, are true. Or,

4. Laws for the ordering and governing of our ſpirits and lives, under which I comprehend all the precepts and prohibitions of ſcripture, which are the matter of our duty. Now a faith of theſe is a perſuaſion that GOD hath commanded and forbidden ſuch things; and conſequently that they are neceſſary to be obſerved by us. Or,

5. Promiſes of good things, either with relation to this life, or the other. Now a faith of the promiſes is a perſuaſion, or confident expectation, that they will be accompliſhed. And thus the apoſtle deſcribes the faith of the promiſes of another world, at the 1ſt ver. of this chap. that it is "the ſubſtance of things

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"hoped for," ὑπόστασις, that is, a confident expectation that the promiſes of the goſpel, which are the matter of our hope, ſhall be accompliſhed; "and the "evidence of things not ſeen," a being convinced of the certainty and reality of future and inviſible things. And thus likewiſe the apoſtle explains to us the faith of Abraham, in reference to the promiſes of God to give him a ſon, Rom. iv. 21. "he was fully perſuad-"ed, that what God had promiſed he was able to "perform." Or,

6. Threatnings. Now a faith of the threatnings is a perſuaſion of the danger we incur, if we neglect our duty; that is, a belief that God juſtly may, and will (having confirmed his threatnings with an oath, which is a ſign of the immutable determination of the divine will) inflict thoſe puniſhments upon us, which he hath threatned, in caſe we diſobey his laws. Theſe ſix heads do, I think, contain all, I am ſure the moſt principal matters of divine revelation; which I have the more carefully diſtinguiſhed, becauſe ſome of them are of a diſtinct and peculiar conſideration from the reſt, as will afterwards appear.

Having thus, as plainly and briefly as I could, opened to you what I mean by this ſecond ſort of divine faith, which is a perſuaſion of things ſupernaturally revealed, I now come to ſatisfy ſuch enquiries about this as may be moſt material. And here I ſhall proceed upon thoſe heads of enquiry which I handled when I ſpake of the firſt ſort of divine faith,

I. Whether this may truly and properly be called faith?

II. What is the argument whereby this faith is wrought?

III. Whether it admit of degrees, and what are the differences of them?

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IV. What are the proper and genuine effects of this faith?

V. In what reſpects it may be ſaid to be divine?

I. Whether this may truly and properly be called faith? And that it may, is evident, becauſe the general definition of faith agrees to it: for a man may be perſuaded in his mind concerning things ſupernaturally revealed; and the ſcripture every where calls a perſuaſion of theſe matters by the name of faith. But beſides this, it ſeems this is the adequate and only notion of faith, as it hath been fixed by the ſchools, and is become a term of art. For the definition that the ſchools give of faith is this; that it is an aſſent to a thing credible, as credible. Now, ſay they, that is credible which relies upon the teſtimony of a credible perſon; and conſequently a human faith is that which relies upon human teſtimony; and a divine faith, that which relies upon the teſtimony or authority of GOD: which definition, though it be ſhort and imperfect (being indeed not a definition of faith in general, but of a particular kind of faith, viz. that which is wrought by the argument which we call teſtimony or authority, and conſequently excludes a belief of the principles of natural religion, and a belief that the ſcriptures are the word of GOD, from being faith:) yet this ſhews thus much, that all agree in this, that a perſuaſion of things ſupernaturally revealed is truly and properly faith.

II. What is the argument whereby this faith, or perſuaſion of things ſupernaturally revealed is wrought in us? And this, by the general conſent of all, is the teſtimony or authority of GOD, ſome way or other revealing theſe things to us; whoſe infallible and unerring knowledge, together with his goodneſs and authority, gives us the higheſt aſſurance, that he neither

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can be deceived himſelf, nor will deceive us in any thing that he reveals to us. I ſay the teſtimony or authority of GOD ſome way or other revealing things to us, is the argument whereby a faith of any ſupernatural revelations is wrought in us: but if we reſtrain all ſupernatural revelations to the bible, as I told you we know of no other; then the particular kind of teſtimony whereby this faith is wrought in us, is the written word of GOD. SERM. CCXX.

III. As to the degrees of this faith. Suppoſing men ſufficiently ſatisfied that the ſcriptures are the word of GOD, that is, a divine revelation; then all thoſe who are ſufficiently ſatisfied of this, do equally believe the things contained in the ſcriptures. For if men be once fully ſatisfied that GOD hath ſpoken any thing, I think no man makes the leaſt doubt but what GOD ſays is true. Now there can be no degrees of faith, where there is no doubt of the contrary; all the degrees that are in faith, ariſing from a greater or leſs mixture of doubting. So that thoſe who do not at all doubt but that the ſcriptures are the word of GOD, have the ſame degree of perſuaſion concerning the matters contained in them: and that no man doubts whether what GOD ſays is true, ariſeth from the fixed and conſtant notion which men univerſally have of God, that he is infallible and true. Therefore we find, Matt. xxi. 25. when our SAVIOUR puts the dilema to the Phariſees, concerning the baptiſm of John, "whether it were "from heaven, or of men? that they reaſoned with "themſelves, ſaying, if we ſhall ſay, from heaven; "he will ſay unto us, why did ye not then believe "him?" Which kind of reaſoning imports thus much, that it is univerſally acknowledged, that no man can in reaſon make the leaſt doubt of that which

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he believes to be from GOD. Therefore a man would wonder what Becanus the jeſuit meant, unleſs it were to abuſe the prophets and apoſtles, when he ſays, tom. iii. of his ſchool-divinity, that the prophets and apoſtles had *evidentiam revelationis, non autem evidentiam primæ veritatis: tametſi enim evidenter cognoſcerent Deum eſſe, qui ipſis revelabat myſteria fidei, non tamen evidenter cognoſcebant Deum eſſe ſummè veracem, qui nec falli potuit nec fallere*; that is, "Though it was ſufficiently evident to the "prophets and apoſtles, that thoſe revelations which "they had were from GOD; yet it was not evident "to them, that divine revelations are true: for "though they did evidently know that there was "a GOD, who revealed to them the myſteries of "faith; yet they did not evidently know that GOD "was infallible and true, who could neither deceive, "nor be deceived." By which he doth not only make the prophets and apoſtles ideots, and deſtitute of one of the moſt common notions of human nature, which is, "that GOD is infallible and true;" but he doth likewiſe make all divine revelation uſeleſs, and to no purpoſe. For to what purpoſe is it for a man to be ſatisfied that GOD reveals ſuch a thing to him; if he be in the mean time unſatisfied, whether what GOD reveals is true? for no man that is unſatisfied, whether what GOD reveals be true, can upon any tolerable ground of reaſon yield a firm aſſent to a divine revelation. But it is pity to ſpend time in confuting any thing which confutes itſelf by it's own abſurdity, and it's direct contradiction to the common notions of human nature. I proceed therefore.

Suppoſing any man be unſatisfied, and do make any doubt whether theſe books called the holy ſcriptures,

tures, or any of them, be the word of GOD, that is, a divine revelation; proportionably to the degree of his doubting concerning the divine authority of the ſcriptures, there will be an abatement of his faith, as to the things contained in them; for he that believes a thing merely upon the credit or teſtimony of ſuch a perſon; ſo much reaſon as he hath to doubt, whether ſuch a perſon did ſpeak, or teſtify ſuch a thing; ſo much reaſon he hath to doubt whether the thing be true. SERM. CCXX.

And upon this account I think it is, that the ſcripture ſpeaks of degrees of faith, of growing and increaſing in faith, of a ſtrong faith, that is, ſuch a faith, as was either wholly, or in a great meaſure free from doubting; and of a weak faith, that is, ſuch a faith, as had a great mixture of doubting; by which we are not to underſtand, that they doubted of the truth of any thing of which they were ſatisfied by a divine revelation; but that they doubted whether ſuch things were divine revelations, or not. So that the great doubt of the diſciples was, whether CHRIST were the true Meſſias, and really the Son of GOD: for ſo far as they were ſatisfied of that, they could not doubt of any thing he ſaid.

IV. What are the proper and genuine effects of this faith? The proper and genuine effects of the belief of the ſcriptures in general, is the conformity of our hearts and lives to what we believe; that is, to be ſuch perſons, and to live ſuch lives as it becomes thoſe, who do heartily believe, and are really perſuaded of the truth of the ſcriptures. And if this be a conſtant and abiding perſuaſion, it will produce this effect; but with more or leſs difficulty, according to the diſpoſition of the ſubject, and the weakneſs or ſtrength of contrary habits and inclinations.

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More particularly the effects of this faith are according to the nature of the matter believed. If it be a hiſtory or relation of things paſt, or prophecy of things to come; it hath an effect upon men ſo far as the hiſtory or prophecy doth concern them. If it be a doctrine; it hath the effect which the particular nature and tendency of ſuch doctrine requires. For inſtance, the doctrine of GOD's goodneſs is apt to inflame us with love to him; of his power and juſtice, with a fear and awe of him. This doctrine, that CHRIST is the SAVIOUR of the world, the proper effect of it, is to make men rely upon him for ſalvation; and ſo of the reſt. If it be a precept; the proper effect of it is obedience: and hence it is that unbelief and diſobedience are frequently put for one another in ſcripture: and diſobedience is oppoſe to faith, 1 Pet. ii. 7. "unto you therefore which be-"lieve, he is precious: but unto them which be "diſobedient, &c." where "the diſobedient" are oppoſed to "them that believe." And ſo likewiſe thoſe who neglect any duty of religion, and do any thing notoriouſly unworthy of their profeſſion, are ſaid to "deny the faith," 1 Tim. v. 8. "but if any "provide not for his own, and eſpecially for thoſe of "his own houſe, he hath denied the faith." How does he "deny the faith?" In diſobeying the precept of the chriſtian religion, which chargeth us with ſuch natural and moral duties. If it be a promiſe; the proper effect of it is, encouragement to obedience by hopes of the thing promiſed. If a threatning; the proper effect of it is to reſtrain men from ſin and diſobedience.

V. In what ſenſe this faith of things ſupernaturally revealed, may be ſaid to be a divine faith? Anſwer, not only in reſpect of the matter and object of it, which

which are divine things, ſuch as concern GOD and religion; and in reſpect of the divine effects it hath upon thoſe who believe theſe things; (for in theſe two reſpects a perſuaſion of the principles of natural religion, may be ſaid to be a divine faith) but likewiſe in reſpect of the argument whereby it is wrought, which is a divine teſtimony. As for the efficient cauſe, the Spirit of GOD, that does not immediately belong to this: for the Spirit of GOD doth not, ſpeaking properly, perſuade us immediately of the truth of things ſupernaturally revealed; but mediately by perſuading us of the truth of the revelation: for to believe a thing to be true, which we are perſuaded is revealed by GOD, is ſo natural and conſequent upon ſuch a perſuaſion, that it doth not ſeem to require any new work of the Spirit. And if this be all the work of the Spirit, to perſuade men that ſuch a revelation is divine; it will be moſt proper to ſpeak of this, when I come to the third ſort of faith, which is a perſuaſion of a divine revelation, that it is ſuch; which becauſe it hath many difficulties in it, it deſerves a more large and particular conſideration. SERM. CCXX.

SERMON CCXXI.

Of the faith or perſuaſion of a divine revelation.

HEB. xi. 6.

But without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe GOD.

SERM. CCXXI. The third ſermon on this text.

I Have obſerved that a religious and divine faith comprehends under it three things.

First,

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Firſt, a perſuaſion of the principles of natural religion, which are known by the light of nature.

Secondly, a perſuaſion of things ſupernatural, and revealed.

Thirdly, a perſuaſion of ſupernatural revelation.

The two former of theſe I have conſidered, and now proceed to the

Third ſort of faith, which I call divine, or religious; viz. a perſuaſion concerning a divine revelation, that it is ſuch; which I diſtinguiſh from the former thus. The former is a perſuaſion concerning the things which are revealed from GOD, that they are true: this is a perſuaſion concerning the revelation it ſelf, that it is divine and from GOD.

For the opening of this there are many things to be taken into conſideration.

I. What we underſtand by a divine revelation.

II. The ſeveral kinds of it.

III. Whether a perſuaſion concerning a divine revelation be properly faith.

IV. How we may come to be aſſured of a divine revelation, or by what arguments a faith or perſuaſion of a divine revelation is wrought in us.

V. The degrees of this perſuaſion or aſſurance.

VI. The effects of it.

VII. In what ſenſe it may be ſaid to be a divine faith; under which I ſhall ſpeak ſomething concerning the teſtimony of the Spirit.

I. What we are to underſtand by a divine revelation. Anſw. A ſupernatural diſcovery, or manifeſtation of things to us. I ſay ſupernatural, becauſe it may either be immediately by GOD, or by the mediation of angels; as moſt, if not all the revelations of the old teſtament were; a ſupernatural diſcovery, or manifeſtation, either immediately to our minds,

minds, and inward faculties; (for I do not ſo well underſtand the diſtinction between underſtanding and imagination, as to be careful to take notice of it;) or elſe mediately to our underſtandings, by the mediation of our outward ſenſes, as by an external appearance to our bodily eyes, or by a voice and ſound to the ſenſe of hearing. But of this I have diſcours'd in a former ſermon *, and therefore ſhall add no more here. SERM. CCXXI.

II. For the ſeveral kinds of divine revelation; of this alſo I have formerly † diſcours'd at large.

III. Whether a perſuaſion of a divine revelation may properly be called faith? To this I anſwer, that according to the ſtrait and narrow notion of faith, which the ſchools have fixed, which is an aſſent to any thing grounded upon the teſtimony, and authority of GOD revealing it, a perſuaſion of a divine revelation cannot properly be called faith; becauſe it is irrational to expect that a man ſhould have another divine revelation to aſſure him, that this is a divine revelation: for then for the ſame reaſon, I muſt expect another divine revelation to aſſure me of that, and ſo without end. But I have ſufficiently ſhewn, that this is not the true notion of faith in general, but only of a particular kind of faith; viz. that which is wrought by the argument, which we call teſtimony, or authority. But according to the true and general notion of faith, which is "a perſuaſion of the "mind concerning any thing," a perſuaſion of the mind concerning a divine revelation, may as properly be called faith, as any thing elſe, if men will but grant, that a man may be ſo ſatisfied, concerning a divine revelation, as verily to believe and be perſuaded that it is ſo.

* See vol. VII. ſerm. CXXVII. † See ibid.

IV. How

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IV. How we may come to be perſuaded of a divine revelation, that it is ſuch; or by what arguments this perſuaſion is wrought in us? For anſwer to this, it will be requiſite diſtinctly to conſider,

Firſt, the perſons to whom a divine revelation is immediately made, what aſſurance they can have of it. And,

Secondly, what aſſurance other perſons can have of it. I ſay, theſe are diſtinctly to be conſidered, becauſe there is a very different account to be given of them.

Firſt, as to thoſe perſons, to whom the revelation is immediately made, the queſtion is, by what arguments or means they may come to be aſſured, that any revelation, which they have, is really and truly ſuch, and not a deluſion or impoſture. The jewiſh doctors tell us, that ſome kind of divine revelations do not carry full aſſurance along with them, that they are divine; ſuch are dreams and viſions, as they are diſtinguiſhed from prophecy: and as to that kind of revelation, which they ſtrictly call prophecy, they give ſeveral characteriſtical notes to diſtinguiſh true divine revelation from deluſion; ſuch as theſe; that the ſpirit of deluſion only works upon the imagination, and the lower faculties; the divine ſpirit of prophecy upon the underſtanding and reaſonable part of the ſoul: that deluſive inſpiration, were accompanied with alienation of mind, which did diſcover itſelf either in rage and fury, or melancholy; but the true prophetical ſpirit is always conſiſtent with the uſe of reaſon and underſtanding. They diſtinguiſh them likewiſe by the manner of their ſeizing upon them; that in the beginning of inſpirations the prophets uſed to have ſome apparition, or to hear ſome voice, either articulate in words, or inarticulate by thunder,

under, or the ſound of a trumpet, which in the Re- SERM.
lations doth frequently precede St. John's viſions; CCXXI.
id by theſe they were aſſured that they were divine.
nd laſtly, that a divine inſpiration did always carry
ong with it a ſtrong evidence of it's original, and
at by the vigor and ſtrength of it's impreſſion, they
ere fully aſſured and ſatisfied beyond all doubt and
ſitation. Thus they. But all that I ſhall ſay by
ay of anſwer to this queſtion, ſhall be in theſe two
ropoſitions.

1. If we believe any ſuch thing as divine revelati-
n, we cannot doubt but thoſe who have it are ſome
ay or other fully ſatisfied of it. The reaſon is evi-
ent; becauſe otherwiſe it would be in vain and to
o purpoſe, and could not poſſibly attain it's end. A
ivine revelation cannot poſſibly ſignify any thing, or
reaſon have any effect upon a man, unleſs he be ſa-
iſfied it is ſuch: for ſo long as he does not know
ut that it is a deluſion, he will not attend to it, or
egard it. So that the diſtinction of the jewiſh doc-
ors between dreams, and viſions, and prophecy, that
his carries always full aſſurance with it, the other
ot, is vain and unreaſonable.

2. The means whereby this aſſurance of a divine
evelation is wrought, is moſt probably the evidence
t carries along with it, whereby it did fully ſatisfy
he perſon that had it of it's divine original. That
God can accompany his own revelations with ſuch a
lear and overpowering light as ſhall diſcover to us
he divinity of them, and ſatisfy us beyond all doubt
nd ſcruple, I think no man can doubt, that conſiders
he vaſt power and influence which he muſt needs
ave over our underſtandings, who made them, and
nows the frame of them: and if this be granted, it
s not neceſſary to explain the particular way how it

is

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is done, it being a thing not to be expreſt in words, but to be felt and experienced. So that the argument, whereby this perſuaſion of a divine revelation is wrought in thoſe that have it, is inward experience of the full ſatisfaction and aſſurance, which they find to be ſupernaturally wrought in them, that is, of which they give no account from themſelves. And this is not a ſtubborn belief, and an obſtinate conceit of a thing: but a good man, who is inſpired, when he reflects upon himſelf, and this aſſurance which he finds in himſelf, he can give a rational account of it to himſelf. Thus he finds that it is a foreign impreſſion, and doth not ſpring from himſelf, nor hath it's riſe from thence; therefore he aſcribes it to ſome ſpirit without himſelf; and he believes that there is a GOD that can communicate himſelf to the minds and ſpirits of men, and that his goodneſs is ſuch, that he will not ſuffer them to be under a neceſſity of deluſion, which they muſt be, if when they have the higheſt aſſurance and ſatisfaction that ſuch a thing is a divine revelation, they may be deceived. And then likewiſe he conſiders the matter of the revelation, which if it do not contradict any eſſential and neceſſary fundamental notion of his underſtanding, he thinks himſelf bound to entertain it upon this aſſurance.

I ſay, good men may give themſelves this rational ſatisfaction: for I grant a wicked man, that rejects and diſobeys the truth of GOD may ſo provoke him, as "to give him up to ſtrong deluſions, to believe "lies;" and he may be as confident of a lie, as a good man is of truth. But as this is not unjuſt from GOD in reference to the perſons, ſo it is no prejudice to the aſſurance which good men may have of divine revelation.

And this aſſurance is ſuch, as it is not in the power of

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if any evil ſpirit to convey to us, concerning a deluſion; or if it be in his power, he is not permitted to do it to any who have not highly provoked God, by rejecting the truth, "to give them up to ſtrong delu-"ſions, to believe lies:" and that ſuch perſons ſhould be obnoxious to ſuch deluſions, as it is not unjuſt in reference to them, ſo neither is it any prejudice to the aſſurance which good men may have of ſuch revelations, which are truly and really divine.

But for the other ways of diſcerning true revelation from falſe, which the Jews mention; as that the Spirit of God always works upon the underſtanding, as well as the imagination, and in conſequence with the uſe of reaſon and underſtanding, and gives ſome ſenſible notice of it's ſeizing upon men, I think all theſe to be uncertain, if they be examined. And if the laſt which they mention, viz. this that I have inſiſted upon, be true, all the other are ſuperfluous. For what need any other ſign to aſſure a man that that is a divine revelation, which carries along with it a clear ſatisfaction and full aſſurance that it is ſuch?

So that it remains now, that we fix upon ſome particular ways, whereby the perſon, that hath a divine revelation, may be aſſured of it; and this I ſhall do by theſe propoſitions:

First, that God can work in the mind of a man a firm perſuaſion of a thing, by giving him a clear and vigorous perception of it; and if ſo, then God can accompany his own revelations with ſuch a clear and overpowering light as ſhall diſcover to us the divinity of them, and ſatisfy us thereof beyond all doubt and ſcruple. And this no man can doubt of, that conſiders the vaſt power and influence which God, who made the ſoul of man, and perfectly knows the frame of it, muſt needs have upon the mind and underſtanding of man. Secondly,

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Secondly, God never perſuades a man of any thing that contradicts the natural and eſſential notions of his mind and underſtanding. For this would be to deſtroy his own workmanſhip, and to impoſe that upon the underſtanding of a man, which whilſt it retains it's own nature, and remains what it is, it cannot poſſibly admit. For inſtance, we cannot imagine that God can perſuade any man that there is no God: for he that believes any thing as from God, muſt neceſſarily believe there is a God; therefore it is impoſſible that he can be perſuaded of this as from God, that there is no God; and that he is not wiſe and juſt, and good and powerful; and that he is not to be honoured and loved by all reaſonable creatures: becauſe theſe do clearly and immediately contradict the moſt eſſential and fundamental notions of our minds concerning God, and the reſpect which is due to him: not only becauſe it is unworthy of God to go about to perſuade a man of a falſhood; but becauſe it is impoſſible in the nature of the thing, that the mind of man, which is naturally prepoſſeſt with contrary notions, ſhould, whilſt it retains it's own nature, admit of ſuch as do clearly and immediately contradict them. For if theſe be natural notions, that there is a God, that he muſt be wiſe and juſt, and good and powerful, and ought to be honoured and loved by his creatures; the mind of man cannot poſſibly admit of any contrary perſuaſions and impreſſions: for the former perſuaſions being natural to us, will always remain while our nature remains; and if any perſuaſions contrary to theſe could be wrought upon our minds, they would ſignify nothing, but would mutually deſtroy one another. For if any man, that is perſuaded that God is good (as every man is, that is perſuaded he is at all) could during the perſuaſion be

be likewiſe of a contrary perſuaſion, that he is not good; this latter perſuaſion would ſignify nothing: for he is not perſuaded that GOD is not good, whilſt he retains this perſuaſion that he is good. SERM. CCXXI.

Thirdly, ſuppoſing the thing revealed do not contradict the eſſential notions of our minds, no good and holy man hath reaſon to doubt of any thing, whether it be a revelation from GOD or not, of which he hath a clear and vigorous perception, and full ſatisfaction in his own mind that it is ſuch. For if a man may have reaſon to doubt of any thing, whereof he hath a clear perception, then no man can be certain of any thing. Now that there is ſuch a thing as certainty, is now ſuppoſed, and not to be proved. I ſay, a good and holy man can have no reaſon to doubt: for a wicked man (I grant) may, by a ſinful rejection of, and diſobedience to the truth, ſo far provoke GOD, as "to give him up to ſtrong deluſions, to believe "lies;" and he may be as confident of a lie, as any good man is of the truth.

And as this is not unjuſt from GOD in reference to wicked men, ſo it is not prejudice to the aſſurance which good men may have concerning a divine revelation.

Fourthly, a good and holy man reflecting upon this aſſurance and perſuaſion that he hath, may be able to give himſelf a reaſonable account of it, and ſatisfy himſelf that it is not a ſtubborn belief and an obſtinate conceit of things without any ground or reaſon. A good man is ſecretly and within himſelf perſuaded, that GOD hath revealed to him ſuch a thing; reflecting upon this perſuaſion, he finds that it is a foreign impreſſion, and doth not ſpring from his own mind: now he believing that there is a GOD, who can, and probably doth communicate and reveal himſelf

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ſelf to the minds of good men; and being withal ſatisfied that his goodneſs is ſuch, that he will not ſuffer good men, who do heartily and ſincerely deſire to know his will, to be under a neceſſity of deluſion (which they unavoidably are, if they then may be deceived, when they have the greateſt aſſurance and cleareſt ſatisfaction, that ſuch a thing is revealed to them of GOD;) from hence he reaſonably concludes, that he ought not to queſtion the matter any farther. I might inſtance in the revelation made to Abraham, concerning the ſacrificing of his ſon, which hath the greateſt difficulty in it of any caſe I know of: but of that I have elſewhere diſcourſed at large *. Thus much for the firſt.

Secondly, what aſſurance can other perſons, who have not the revelation immediately made to them, have of a divine revelation? To this I ſhall anſwer by theſe propoſitions:

1. That there are ſome means whereby a man may be aſſured of another's revelation that it is divine. For,

(1.) Otherwiſe it would ſignify nothing, but only to the perſon that immediately had it; which would make void the chief end of moſt revelations, which are ſeldom made to particular perſons for their own ſakes only, but for the moſt part, on purpoſe that they may be made known to others, which could not effectually be done, unleſs there be ſome means whereby men may be aſſured of revelations made to another.

(2.) None could be guilty of unbelief but thoſe who had immediate revelation made to them. For no man is guilty of unbelief that is not obliged to believe: but no man can be under an obligation to believe any thing, who hath not ſufficient means whereby he may be aſſured that ſuch a thing is true.

* See vol. IX. ſerm. CLX.

2. The

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2. The private assurance and satisfaction of another concerning a revelation made to him, can signify nothing at all to me, to assure me of it. For what satisfaction is it to me, that another may say, he hath a revelation, unless I have some means to be assured that what he says is true? For if I must believe every spirit, that is, every man that says he is inspired, I lie open to all possible impostures and delusions, and must believe every one that either foolishly conceits, or falsely pretends that he hath a revelation: for both the conceited and pretended enthusiast will say they have revelations, with as much confidence as those who are truly and divinely inspired: and to take every man's word in matters of such huge consequence and importance, as revelation from GOD ought to be presumed to be, would not be faith, but credulity, that is, an ungrounded persuasion; which how severely GOD punished, you may see in that famous instance, 1 Kings xiii. where the prophet that was sent to Bethel, is upon his return torn in pieces by a lion, because of his credulity and easy belief of a pretended revelation. I confess this case is somewhat different from theirs who simply believe a pretended revelation, as being complicated with some other aggravating circumstances. For he had had an immediate revelation from GOD, "not to eat, nor "drink at Bethel; nor to return the same way that "he came:" upon his return an old prophet meets him, and tells him that an angel had appeared to him, and had bid him bring him back, and to cause him to eat and drink; he believes him, and turns in with him. Now this was the aggravation of his credulity, that when he himself had had an express revelation from GOD, concerning which he was satisfied, he hearkned to the pretended revelation of another, con-

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cerning which he had no aſſurance, in contradiction to a divine revelation, which he knew to be ſuch. Not but that the command which God had given him was in it's own nature revocable, and God might have countermanded it by another immediate revelation to him, or by an equivalent, that is a miracle wrought by the prophet who pretended to countermand it from God. *Unumquodque diſſolvitur eo modo quo ligatur*; the obligation which was brought upon him by an immediate revelation could not be diſſolved but by another immediate revelation, or evidence equivalent to it. However, this inſtance ſerves in the general to my purpoſe, that a man may be faulty by credulity as well as by unbelief: and as a man ought not to diſbelieve where there is ſufficient evidence: ſo neither ought he to believe any thing without ſufficient grounds of aſſurance.

3. That miracles wrought for the confirmation of any divine teſtimony or revelation made to another, are a ſufficient means whereby thoſe, who have not the divine revelation immediately made to them, may be aſſured that it is divine; I ſay, theſe are ſufficient means of aſſurance in this caſe. I do not ſay they are the only means (for it does not become men to limit the power and wiſdom of God) but I do not know of any other means of aſſurance, upon which men can ſecurely rely; and it is a great preſumption that this is the beſt and fitteſt, if not the only means, becauſe the wiſdom of God hath always pitched upon it, and conſtantly made uſe of it, and no other. Under miracles I comprehend the prediction of future events, which God claims as a peculiar prerogative to himſelf, becauſe ſuch things are out of the reach of any created underſtanding; and therefore in the prophet Iſaiah he challengeth the idols of the heathens to give this

this teſtimony or argument of their divinity; "ſhew "us things that are to come, that we may know that "ye are gods."

But here we muſt diſtinguiſh between doubtful and unqueſtionable miracles. I call thoſe doubtful miracles, which, though a man cannot tell how they can be done by any natural power, yet do not carry that full conviction with them, as to be univerſally owned and acknowledged for arguments of a divine power. Such were thoſe which the magicians did by their inchantments. I call thoſe unqueſtionable, which, conſidering their quality and number, and the publick manner of doing them, are out of all queſtion. Such were the miracles of Moſes, and our SAVIOUR. Now a doubtful, and a ſingle, and a private wonder, or miracle, as I may call it, can give no confirmation to any thing in oppoſition to a revelation, or a doctrine, confirmed by many, and publick, and unqueſtionable miracles. Upon this account Moſes forbids the children of Iſrael to hearken to any prophet that ſhould come to ſeduce them to idolatry; yea, though he ſhould "give thee a ſign or wonder, and the ſign or "wonder ſhould come to paſs," Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3, 4. Now here lies the ſtrength of the reaſon, "be"cauſe he hath ſpoken to turn you away from the "LORD your GOD, which brought you out of the "land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the houſe "of bondage;" that is, becauſe he contradicts the great revelation which GOD made of himſelf, and confirmed by ſuch a ſucceſſion of ſo many and ſo great miracles; the credit of which revelation ought not in reaſon to be called in queſtion, upon the working of a ſingle and a private wonder, which we could not diſtinguiſh from a miracle. Upon the ſame account St. Paul, Gal. i. 8. ſays, "though an angel from

SERM. CCXXI. "heaven ſhould preach any other doctrine than that "which had been preached unto them, he ſhould be "accurſed;" that is, after ſo clear and great confirmation, as was given by the goſpel, a contrary doctrine, though it ſhould come from an angel, ſhould be rejected as execrable.

But you will ſay, ſuppoſe ſuch a prophet as Moſes ſpeaks of here, ſuch an angel as St. Paul mentions, ſhould work as many and as great miracles as Moſes and CHRIST wrought, ſhould we then believe them?

I anſwer, this is not to be ſuppoſed: for ſuppoſing the providence of GOD in the world, it cannot be imagined that an equal atteſtation ſhould be given to a falſe doctrine and a true. But that the greateſt and moſt unqueſtionable miracles are to carry it, is evident; becauſe this is all the reaſon why Moſes was to be credited above the magicians, becauſe he wrought more and greater wonders than they did. But if it could be ſuppoſed that any one could work as great miracles for the confirmation of idolatry, as were wrought by way of atteſtation to the true worſhip of GOD, then there would be no difference, but what the reaſon of the thing makes, the belief of one GOD being more reaſonable than many; and not to make an image or ſenſible repreſentation of a ſpirit, being more reaſonable than to make one. But if this could be ſuppoſed, the natural iſſue and conſequence of it would be atheiſm; a man would believe neither that nor the other, nor that there is any GOD at all.

But a farther account of the nature and difference of miracles, I reſerve to ſome * particular diſcourſes on that ſubject. At preſent, for the fuller opening of this matter, it will be proper to ſhew,

1. That the divine authority both of the doctrine

* See ſermons on Heb. ii. 4. in this vol.

of

of Moſes and CHRIST is reſolved into miracles.

2. What aſſurance of miracles is ſufficient to perſuade men to believe that teſtimony, for the confirmation of which they are wrought.

3. What aſſurance they give us, that the ſcriptures are a divine revelation. But the conſideration of theſe I refer to the next opportunity.

SERMON CCXXII.

Of the faith or perſuaſion of a divine revelation.

HEB. xi. 6.

But without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe GOD.

IN diſcourſing of the faith or perſuaſion of a divine revelation, I propoſed the conſidering theſe ſeven things. SERM. CCXXII. The fourth ſermon on this text.

1. What we underſtand by a divine revelation.

II. The ſeveral kinds of it.

III. Whether a perſuaſion concerning a divine revelation be properly faith.

IV. How we may come to be aſſured of a divine revelation; or by what arguments a faith or perſuaſion of a divine revelation is wrought in us.

V. The degrees of this perſuaſion or aſſurance.

VI. The effects of it.

VII. In what ſenſe it may be ſaid to be a divine faith.

I was upon the IVth of theſe, viz. conſidering by what arguments faith or perſuaſion of a divine revelation is wrought in us; which led me to conſider the evidence of miracles; and I propoſed to ſhew particularly theſe three things.

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1. That the divine authority both of the doctrine of Moſes and CHRIST is reſolved into miracles.

2. What aſſurance of miracles is ſufficient to perſuade men to believe that teſtimony, for the confirmation of which they are wrought.

3. What aſſurance they give us, that the ſcriptures are a divine revelation.

I proceed to treat of theſe in their order.

1. I ſhall ſhew that the divine authority both of the doctrine of Moſes and of CHRIST is reſolved into miracles. We find the ſcripture lays the whole weight of the divine authority both of the law and goſpel, of the revelation of the old and new teſtament, upon this evidence, Exod. iv. 1, 2, 3. When GOD ſends Moſes, he objects, "that they will not believe "him, nor hearken to him, but will ſay the LORD hath "not appeared unto him." Thereupon GOD gives him a power of miracles, that they may believe, "that "the LORD GOD of their fathers, the GOD of Abra-"ham, Iſaac, and Jacob hath appeared unto them;" and by the evidence of thoſe miracles which he wrought he prevailed over the magicians. And generally throughout the ſtory of the old teſtament we find all perſons yielding to the evidence of miracles, as a ſufficient atteſtation to a prophet and his meſſage. When Elijah had prevailed with GOD in a miraculous manner, to confirm his own worſhip, and confute the worſhip of Baal, by ſending fire from heaven to conſume the ſacrifice, the people yield to this evidence, and cry out, "the LORD he is GOD, the LORD he "is GOD," 1 Kings xviii. 39. When Elijah raiſed the woman's ſon, then ſhe owned him for a prophet, 1 Kings xvii. 24. "now by this I know that thou "art a man of GOD, and that the word of the LORD "in thy mouth is true." So likewiſe Naaman was con-

convinced by the miraculous cure which the prophet Eliſha wrought on him, 2 Kings v. 15. "Behold! "now I know that there is no GOD in all the earth "but in Iſrael." SERM. CCXXII.

And ſo likewiſe the divinity of our SAVIOUR and his doctrines is reſolved into the evidence of his miracles. This is the evidence CHRIST gives of himſelf, when John ſent his diſciples to enquire whether he was the Meſſias, Matt. xi. 2. "Now when John had "heard in the priſon the works of CHRIST, he ſent "two of his diſciples, and ſaid unto him, art thou he "that ſhould come: or do we look for another? "JESUS anſwered and ſaid unto them, Go and ſhew "John again thoſe things which you do hear, and "ſee: the blind receive their ſight, and the lame "walk, the lepers are cleanſed, and the deaf hear, the "dead are raiſed up, and the poor have the goſpel "preached unto them. And bleſſed is he whoſoe-"ver ſhall not be offended in me." So John v. 36. "But I have greater witneſs than that of John: "for the works which the Father hath given me to "finiſh, the ſame works that I do, bear witneſs of "me, that the Father hath ſent me." Chap. x. 25. "JESUS anſwered them, I told you, and ye believed "not: the works that I do in my Father's name, "they bear witneſs of me." Ver. 37, 38. "If I do "not the works of my Father, believe me not: but "if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the "works: that ye may know and believe that the "Father is in me, and I in him." Chap. xiv. 11. "Believe me that I am the Father, and the Father "in me: or elſe believe me for the very works ſake." Chap. xx. 30, 31. "And many other ſigns truly did "JESUS in the preſence of his diſciples, which are "not written in this book. But theſe are written,

"that

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" that ye might believe that JESUS is the CHRIST, " the Son of GOD, and that believing, ye might have " life through his name." And from hence our SAVIOUR aggravates the unbelief and impenitency of the Jews, becauſe they reſiſted this higheſt evidence, Matt. xi. 20, 21, 22, 23, 24. " Then began " he to upbraid the cities wherein moſt of his mighty " works were done, becauſe they repented not. Wo " unto thee Chorazin, wo unto thee Bethſaida: for " if the mighty works which were done in you, had " been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have " repented long ago in ſackcloth and aſhes. But I " ſay unto you, it ſhall be more tolerable for Tyre " and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. " And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto " heaven, ſhall be brought down to hell. For if the " mighty works which have been done in thee, had " been done in Sodom, it would have remained un- " til this day. But I ſay unto you, that it ſhall be " more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day " of judgment, than for thee." John xv. 24. " If I " had not done among them the works which none " other man did, they had not had ſin: but now " have they both ſeen, and hated both me and my " Father." And ſo the apoſtle tells us, that miracles are the great confirmation of the goſpel, and are ſo clear an evidence of the truth of it, that they render all unbelievers inexcuſable, Heb. ii. 2, 3. " for " if the word ſpoken by angels was ſtedfaſt, and e- " very tranſgreſſion and diſobedience received a juſt " recompence of reward: how ſhall we eſcape, if we " neglect ſo great ſalvation, which at the firſt began " to be ſpoken by the LORD, and was confirmed un- " to us by them that heard him?"

In particular, the great weight of the goſpel is laid upon

upon the miracle of CHRIST's reſurrection from the dead, which our SAVIOUR mentions as the "only "ſign that ſhould be given to that generation," that is, the cleareſt. And the apoſtle, Rom. i. 4. ſaith, that "he was declared to be the Son of GOD with "power, according to the Spirit of holineſs, by the "reſurrection from the dead." This put it out of all queſtion. And St. Paul, in his Sermon to the Athenians, Acts xvii. 30, 31. inſiſts upon this as the great evidence; "and the times of their ignorance "GOD winked at; but now commandeth all men "every where to repent: becauſe he hath appointed "a day in which he will judge the world in righte-"ouſneſs by that man whom he hath ordained, "whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men, in "that he hath raiſed him from the dead." And this was the proper work of the apoſtles, to be witneſſes to the world of this great miracle, Acts i. 21, 22. "wherefore of theſe men which have companied with "us all the time that the LORD JESUS went in and "out among us, beginning from the baptiſm of John "unto that ſame day that he was taken up from us, "muſt one be ordained to be a witneſs with us of his "reſurrection." So St. Peter in his ſermon, Acts ii. 32. "him hath GOD raiſed up, whereof we all "are witneſſes." And to mention no more, Acts x. 38, 39, 40, 41. "GOD anointed JESUS of Na-"zareth with the holy Ghoſt and with power, who "went about doing good, and healing all that were "oppreſſed of the devil: for GOD was with him. "And we are witneſſes of all things which he did "both in the land of the Jews and in Hieruſalem; "whom they ſlew and hanged on a tree: him GOD "raiſed up the third day, and ſhewed him o-"penly; not to all the people, but unto witneſſes "choſen

SERM. CCXXII.

SERM. CCXXII. "choſen before of GOD, even to us who did eat "and drink with him after he roſe from the dead."

2. What aſſurance of miracles is ſufficient to perſuade men to believe the revelation or teſtimony, for the confirmation of which they are wrought. Of this aſſurance there are three degrees, all which do oblige men to believe the divine revelation for which they are wrought.

(1.) If we have the evidence of our own ſenſes for it, that is, if we ſee them wrought. This evidence the diſciples of our LORD had, and the Jews, and therefore their unbelief was inexcuſable; and the blaſpheming the Spirit, whereby they ſaw ſuch miracles to be wrought, was the ſin againſt the holy Ghoſt.

(2.) If we have the credible report of eye-witneſſes of thoſe miracles, who are credible perſons, and we have no reaſon to doubt of their teſtimony; that is, if we have the reports of them immediately from the mouth of thoſe who were eye-witneſſes of them. That this lays likewiſe an obligation on men to believe, appears by our SAVIOUR's reproof of Thomas, who would not believe except he himſelf ſaw: but moſt expreſly from that text, Mark xvi. 14. "he upbraided them with their unbelief and "hardneſs of heart, becauſe they believed not them "which had ſeen him after he was riſen."

(3.) If the credible report of eye-witneſſes concerning ſuch miracles be conveyed to us in ſuch a manner, and with ſo much evidence, as we have no reaſon to doubt of it. For why ſhould we not believe a credible report, conveyed to us in ſuch a manner as we have no reaſon to queſtion, but that it hath been faithfully conveyed and tranſmitted to us? St. John thought this to be aſſurance ſufficient to induce belief,

lief, John xx. 31. "but theſe things were written, SERM. CCXXII.
"that ye might believe," &c. And this is that aſſurance which we, who live at this diſtance from the age of CHRIST and his apoſtles, have of the miracles wrought in confirmation of the goſpel. I ſhall have occaſion to enlarge upon theſe heads hereafter.

3. What aſſurance miracles give us, that the ſcriptures are a divine revelation. And this contains four diſtinct queſtions in it.

1. What aſſurance we have from hence, that the doctrine contained in the ſcripture is from GOD? To which the anſwer is eaſy; becauſe theſe miracles were wrought for the confirmation of this doctrine.

2. The queſtion is, what aſſurance the miracles give us, that thoſe perſons who are ſaid to be the pen-men of the ſeveral books of ſcripture, were really ſo? To this I anſwer; none at all: for I do not know of any miracle that was wrought to prove Moſes wrote the pentateuch, or that St. Matthew wrote the goſpel which goes under his name. But if the queſtion be, how then am I aſſured of this? I anſwer, by credible and uncontrol'd report. It bears his name, and hath always been received for his: and if this will not ſatisfy, I cannot prove it farther, it is too late now to prove it by any other argument. St. Matthew is dead, and thoſe who ſaw him write it, and thoſe who received it from them; ſo that we cannot go to enquire of them in order to our ſatisfaction: but the beſt of it is, that as it cannot now be proved at this diſtance, otherwiſe than by conſtant and uncontrol'd report; ſo no man at this diſtance can have any reaſon to doubt of it; and ſo long as no man can have any reaſon to doubt of it, there can be no need of proving it, eſpecially

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cially conſidering that it is by no means neceſſary to ſalvation, to believe that St. Matthew wrote the hiſtory of the goſpel, but only to believe what he wrote.

3. The queſtion is, what aſſurance miracles give, that thoſe perſons who are ſaid to be the pen-men of the books of ſcripture were divinely inſpired? The miracles (under which I comprehend the prediction of future events) which Moſes, and the prophets, and the apoſtles wrought, were teſtimonies from heaven, that they were divine perſons, and that what they ſaid was to be credited, and conſequently if they gave out themſelves for ſuch, that they were ſuch. That the pen-men of the new teſtament were perſons endued with a miraculous power, is plain, becauſe they were moſt of them apoſtles: and for the reſt we have no reaſon to doubt of it; thoſe extraordinary gifts being ſo common in the primitive times: however, ſo long as there is nothing in the reſt that is diſſonant from, or contrary to what thoſe wrote, of whoſe inſpirations we are aſſured, and theſe their writings have always been received in the church as of divine inſpiration, which we may well preſume was not raſhly done, and without grounds, we have no reaſon to doubt as to them: or if they were, ſo long as they contain nothing that is contrary to thoſe who are unqueſtionably inſpired, the matter is of no dangerous conſequence. And as for the pen-men of the old teſtament, we are aſſured that they were all inſpired, by one in the new teſtament, that was unqueſtionably ſo; St. Paul, who tells us, "that all ſcripture is of divine inſpiration," meaning the books of the old teſtament, which were called by that name, καθ' ἐξοχήν, or by way of eminency.

But

But if any one enquire farther, how far the pen-men SERM. CCXXII.
ſcripture were inſpired in the writing of thoſe
oks? whether only ſo far as to be ſecured from
iſtake in the delivery of any meſſage or doctrine
om God, or in the relation of any hiſtory, or mat-
of fact; yet ſo, as they were left every man to
own ſtyle and manner of expreſſion? or that every
ing they wrote was immediately dictated to them,
d that not only the ſenſe of it, but the very words
d phraſes by which they expreſs things, and that
ey were merely inſtruments or pen-men; I ſhall
t take upon me to determine? I ſhall only ſay
is in general, that conſidering the end of this in-
ration, which was to inform the world certainly
the mind and will of God, it is neceſſary for eve-
man to believe that the inſpired pen-men of ſcrip-
re were ſo far aſſiſted as was neceſſary to this end;
d he that thinks upon good grounds, that this end
nnot be ſecured, unleſs every word and ſyllable
re immediately dictated, he hath reaſon to believe
was ſo; but if any man upon good grounds thinks
e end of writing the ſcripture may be ſufficiently
ured without that, he hath no reaſon to conclude,
at God, who is not wanting in what is neceſſary,
guilty of doing what is ſuperfluous. And if any
an is of opinion, that Moſes might write the hiſtory
thoſe actions which he himſelf did or was preſent
, without an immediate revelation of them; or
at Solomon by his natural and acquired wiſdom
ight ſpeak thoſe wiſe ſayings which are in his pro-
rbs; or the evangeliſts might write what they
ard and ſaw, or what they had good aſſurance of
om others, as St. Luke tells he did; or that St.
ul might write for his cloak and parchments at
roas, and ſalute by name his friends and brethren;

or

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or that he might adviſe Timothy to drink a little wine, &c. without the immediate dictate of the Spirit of GOD, he ſeems to have reaſon on his ſide. For that men may, without an immediate revelation, write thoſe things which they think without a revelation ſeems very plain. And that they did ſo, there is this probable argument for it, becauſe we find that the evangeliſts, in relating the diſcourſes of CHRIST, are very far from agreeing in the particular expreſſions and words, though they do agree in the ſubſtance of the diſcourſes: but if the words had been dictated by the Spirit of GOD, they muſt have agreed in them. For when St. Luke differs from St. Matthew, in relating what our SAVIOUR ſaid, it is impoſſible that they ſhould both relate it right as to the very words and form of expreſſion; but they both relate the ſubſtance of what he ſaid. And if it had been of concernment, that every thing that they wrote ſhould be dictated *ad apicem*, to a tittle, by the Spirit of GOD, it is of the ſame concernment ſtill, that the providence of GOD ſhould have ſecured the ſcriptures ſince to a tittle from the leaſt alteration; which that it is not done, appears by the various readings both of the old and new teſtament, concerning which no man can infallibly ſay, that this is right, and not the other. It ſeems ſufficient in this matter to aſſert, that the Spirit of GOD did reveal to the pen-men of the ſcriptures what was neceſſary to be revealed; and as to all other things, that he did ſuperintend them in the writing of it, ſo far as to ſecure them from any material error or miſtake in what they have delivered. Or,

4. If the queſtion be, what aſſurance we have from miracles, that all thoſe books which we recive are canonical? To this I anſwer, I do not know of any

y miracle that was ever wrought on purpoſe to nfirm the canon of the ſcriptures: but as for the oks of the old teſtament, we have ſufficient aſſu- ıce, that thoſe which we now receive are thoſe ıich the Jews received for ſuch in our SAVIOUR's ne; and he doth not any where find fault with any them as not canonical; which we have no reaſon doubt but he would have done, if any one of them d been otherwiſe. And that theſe are the ſame the ws then received, appears ſufficiently, becauſe both ws and Chriſtians to this day agree in them. As r the books of the new teſtament, we are ſufficiently ıred, that theſe and no other are the books which e ancient church received for canonical and of di- ne authority; and though ſome of them were for a ne controverted, yet upon farther enquiry and exa- ination they were received. SERM. CCXXII.

V. Whether this faith concerning a divine revela- ın made to others, do admit of degrees? That it ıth, is evident from theſe expreſſions which the ipture uſeth, of "increaſing faith, of growing in it, of a weak, and ſtrong faith," all which ainly ſuppoſe degrees. And that theſe degrees of ith which the ſcripture ſpeaks of, are to be under- ood of a higher and lower degree of aſſurance con- rning a divine revelation as ſuch, and concerning e things revealed, I ſhewed before. For all the ubts which the diſciples had concerning what our AVIOUR taught, did reſolve itſelf into this, whe- er he was the Meſſias, and ſent by GOD to teach oſe things; which had they been fully ſatisfied of, ey could have made no doubt of any thing that he ught.

And here it will be proper to enquire, what is the gheſt degree of aſſurance which we can have con-

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cerning a divine revelation made to another, that it is ſuch; whether it be an infallible aſſurance, or only an undoubted certainty. The difference between them is this: an infallible aſſurance is ſuch as excludes all poſſibility of error and miſtake: an undoubted certainty doth not exclude all poſſibility of miſtake, but only all juſt and reaſonable cauſe why a prudent and conſiderate man ſhould doubt. And the reaſon why I make this enquiry is, in order to be ſatisfied of a clear and firm way for the reſolution of our faith againſt the papiſts, who ſay it is impoſſible for us to give any ſatisfactory account of our faith, becauſe we do finally reſolve it into fallible grounds, and conſequently our faith muſt be fallible, and conſequently cannot be divine, becauſe all divine faith is infallible: for, ſay they, when we enquire why you believe the doctrines of the chriſtian religion, you ſay, upon divine authority, or the revelation of GOD in ſcripture. This is granted to be an infallible ground, if we can be infallibly aſſured that the ſcriptures are a divine revelation; therefore they enquire in the ſecond place, why do you believe the ſcriptures to be a divine revelation? we ſay, becauſe the perſons who delivered the doctrines contained in them, had the greateſt atteſtation from GOD, that they were employed by him, to reveal and make known his mind; and this atteſtation was miracles. But then they aſk, what aſſurance have you that ſuch miracles were wrought? have you an infallible aſſurance, or not? if not, then it cannot be a ſufficient ground for a divine faith, which is always infallible. In oppoſition therefore to them, I ſhall not now attempt to ſhew the inſufficiency of their way of reſolving faith; but vindicate ours as ſufficient, by laying down and proving, if I can, theſe propoſitions.

1. That

1. That infallibility is not eſſential to divine faith, SERM. CCXXII.
l neceſſarily included in the notion of it; which I
ve thus. Divine faith admits of degrees, as I
e ſhewed before: but there can be no degree of
allibility. Infallibility is an impoſſibility of being
eived; but there are no degrees of impoſſibility;
: thing is not more impoſſible than another; but
things that are impoſſible, are equally ſo.

2. That the aſſurance which we have of the mira-
s wrought for the confirmation of the goſpel, is
: an infallible aſſurance. I ſhewed before that there
three ways whereby we may be aſſured of matter
fact, ſuch as the working of miracles is.

Firſt, by our own ſenſes.

Secondly, by the report of credible witneſs.

Thirdly, by credible hiſtory. But none of theſe
ys give us infallible aſſurance. That it is poſſible
· ſenſes may deceive us, I think no body will de-
; and if ſo, then the teſtimony of witneſſes, and
report of hiſtory, which likewiſe depends origi-
ly upon ſenſes, may deceive us. I do not know
ourth way whereby we may be aſſured of matter
fact.

3. That an undoubted aſſurance of a divine reve-
on, that it is ſuch, is as much as in reaſon can be
ected. I deny not but that a divine revelation
an infallible ground of faith; becauſe whatever
D ſays is infallible true, and a faith built upon a
ine revelation would be infallible, if we could be
allibly aſſured that it is a divine revelation; but
t we cannot be without another divine revelation
aſſure us infallibly that this is one, and that other
uld require a third, and ſo without end; which
ng abſurd and unreaſonable, it remains that an
allible aſſurance of a divine revelation is impoſſi-

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ble; and conſequently, that we can have no more than an undoubted aſſurance; and this is as much as in reaſon we can expect to have; for it is unreaſonable to expect that we ſhould have any greater aſſurance that ſuch a revelation is from GOD, than we have that there is a GOD; becauſe that there is a GOD, is the firſt and moſt fundamental principle of religion, and it is unreaſonable to expect greater aſſurance of any thing in religion, than we have of that which is the firſt principle of it. And indeed it is impoſſible; for no man can be infallibly aſſured, that a revelation is from GOD, unleſs he be firſt infallibly aſſured that there is a GOD, but no man hath more than undoubted aſſurance that there is a GOD. No man pretends to a divine revelation that there is a GOD; but only to have rational ſatisfaction of it, ſuch as leaves no juſt or reaſonable cauſe to doubt of it. And why then ſhould any deſire greater aſſurance of a divine revelation, than he hath of GOD?

4. An undoubted aſſurance is ſufficient to conſtitute a divine faith. Mark xvi. 14. it is ſaid, "CHRIST "upbraided his diſciples with their unbelief; becauſe "they believed not them who had ſeen him after he "was riſen." Suppoſe now the diſciples had believed, which they ought to have done; this faith of theirs would have been a truly divine faith; but by no means infallible. For that cannot be an infallible faith which is built but upon fallible grounds: now the ground upon which they ought to have believed, was the report of credible witneſſes; but the report of credible witneſſes is by no means infallible: it is indeed undoubted, for I have no reaſon to doubt of a credible report; for that is credible which I have juſt cauſe to believe; but I can have no juſt cauſe to doubt of that which I have juſt cauſe to believe.

As

As an undoubted aſſurance is ſufficient to conſti- SERM. CCXXII.
e a divine faith, ſo it is ſufficient to all the ends
l purpoſes of a divine faith. To inſtance in the
h of the promiſes of eternal life. What is the
l and deſign of this faith, but to encourage our
dience, and make us continue in it, notwithſtand-
; the hazard of any thing in this world? Now I
, an undoubted aſſurance is abundantly ſufficient
this end. Do not men venture their eſtates in
ffic to places they never ſaw, becauſe they have
from credible perſons, that there are ſuch places;
d they have no reaſon to doubt their teſtimony:
d why ſhould not the ſame aſſurance ſerve us in
eater matters; if an undoubted aſſurance of a leſſer
nefit and advantage will make men venture as
uch, why ſhould any man deſire greater aſſu-
nce of any thing, than to have no juſt reaſon to
ubt of it; why more than ſo much as the thing is
pable of? I cannot poſſibly underſtand, why every
an ſhould not be contented with ſufficient aſſu-
nce, or for what reaſon a man ſhould deſire more
an enough; and why a man ſhould not be ſatisfied
at a thing is ſo, when he hath as great aſſurance of
, and as good evidence for it, as he could have,
ppoſing it were.

And for men to ſay, nothing leſs than infallible
ſurance can ſatisfy a man's mind, that men will
ways doubt ſo long as there is a poſſibility of the
ontrary, and there will be a poſſibility of the con-
rary, until we have infallible aſſurance, is as unrea-
onable as can be imagined. I aſk any man, whether
e be infallibly aſſured that there was ſuch a man as
William the Conqueror? or that there is ſuch a
ountry as Spain? If he ſay he is, I aſk, where is
is infallible evidence for this? He will cite ſeveral

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hiſtorians: but all this is human teſtimony, and that is fallible. It ſeems then he is not infallibly certain there was ſuch a man, or there is ſuch a country; and conſequently there is a poſſibility of the contrary. 'Tis granted there is: But is any ſober man unſatisfied in his mind about theſe things? I would fain meet with the man, that will tell me in good earneſt, that he hath reaſon to doubt, whether there was ſuch a man, or not; and whether there be ſuch a place as Spain, or not? So that it is fond for any man to alledge a bare poſſibility of the contrary, as a reaſonable cauſe of doubting concerning any thing, for which we have as good evidence as the thing is capable of.

Upon theſe grounds we can eaſily reſolve our faith. We believe the doctrine of chriſtian religion, becauſe it is revealed by GOD; we believe it to be revealed by GOD, becauſe it was confirmed by unqueſtionable miracles; we believe ſuch miracles were wrought, becauſe we have as great aſſurance of this, as any matter of fact, at ſuch a diſtance from the time it was done, is capable of. Now if the papiſts ſay, this doth at leaſt amount to no more than moral aſſurance; I grant it doth not: but then I have proved this aſſurance to be as much as in reaſon can be expected, and as much as is ſufficient to the nature and ends of a divine faith, and that an infallible aſſurance is not agreeable to a human underſtanding; but an incommunicable attribute and prerogative of the divine nature, which whoever pretends to, he hath not the modeſty of a creature, but does by a ſacrilegious ambition attempt the throne of GOD, and equal himſelf to the moſt High. And therefore it is no wonder that the popes of Rome, after they had once aſſumed to themſelves to be infal-

fallible, did preſently arrogate to themſelves the titles of GOD, there being ſuch ſtrict connexion between the attribute of infallibility, and the divine nature, that whoever challengeth the firſt, may with equal reaſon claim the other.

I ſhall only add this, that nothing hath been more pernicious to chriſtian religion, than the vain pretence of men to greater aſſurance concerning things relating to it, than they can make good; the miſchief of which is this; that when diſcerning and inquiſitive men find that men pretend to greater matters than they can prove, this makes them doubt of all they ſay, and to call in queſtion the truth of chriſtianity itſelf. Whereas if men would be contented to ſpeak juſtly of things, and pretend to no greater aſſurance than they can bring evidence for; conſiderate men would be apt to believe them. Every knowing man being more ready to liſten to a modeſt man, whoſe confidence bears a proportion to the reaſons and arguments he brings for what he ſays, than to a confident pretender, who calls every weak ſaying a demonſtration. And indeed ſuch men are but juſtly dealt withal, ſince the experience of the world hath ſufficiently taught us, that uſually thoſe who ſpeak modeſtly of things are furniſhed with the beſt arguments for their aſſertions; and that thoſe who have made the ſtrongeſt pretences to infallibility in any thing, have the weakeſt reaſons for what they have ſaid; of which this account may be given, that good reaſons and arguments are requiſite to beget in a man a rational aſſurance; but a ſtrong conceit is ſufficient to beget in men an opinion of infallibility.

VI. What is the proper and genuine effect of this faith of a divine revelation? I anſwer: a compliance with the deſign and intention of it.

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VII. In what reſpect this may be called a divine faith? to this I anſwer: not only in reſpect of the object of it, and the argument whereby it is wrought, and the effect of it: but likewiſe in reſpect of the author and efficient of it, which is the divine ſpirit. And here, if time would permit, I ſhould ſpeak of the teſtimony of the ſpirit; not as an argument whereby a perſuaſion of a divine revelation, viz. that the ſcriptures are the word of GOD, is wrought; but alſo he is the author and efficient cauſe of it, I do moſt readily grant the great influence that the ſpirit of GOD hath upon the minds of men in this work of faith, as well as in every ſpiritual act: but it is to be enquired, how the Spirit of GOD may be ſaid to work this faith in us; whether by ſtrengthening the faculty; or by holding the mind intent upon the argument, whereby this perſuaſion is wrought; or diſcovering the object; or removing the impediments: or farthering and helping forward the efficacy of it upon our hearts and lives. But of this, GOD willing, in my next diſcourſe.

SERMON CCXXIII.

Of the teſtimony of the Spirit, to the truth of the goſpel.

HEB. xi. 6.

But without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe GOD.

SERM. CCXXIII. The fifth ſermon on this text.

IN diſcourſing of the faith or perſuaſion of a divine revelation, I came to enquire, in what reſpects this may be called a divine faith. To which my anſwer was, that it is a divine faith, not only with reſpect to the object of it, and the argument whereby it is wrought, and the effect of it: but likewiſe in reſpect of the author and efficient of it, which is the divine Spirit. I proceed therefore to conſider the teſtimony of the divine Spirit, not only as an argument whereby a perſuaſion of a divine revelation, viz. that the ſcriptures are the word of GOD, is wrought: but alſo as he is the author and efficient cauſe of it. The ſcripture doth in a peculiar manner aſcribe the belief of a divine revelation, eſpecially of the revelation of the goſpel, to the Spirit of GOD. In this ſenſe the ſcripture ſaith, "that no man can ſay, that JESUS is the CHRIST, but by the Spirit of GOD." And though every good perſuaſion that we have, be in ſome ſort or other to be aſcribed to GOD; yet I obſerve it to be the phraſe of the new teſtament, to attribute the belief of the goſpel, in a more peculiar manner, to the Spirit of GOD. When any man believes the principles of natural religion, that there is a GOD, that the ſoul is immortal, and that there are rewards after this life, as the heathens did; even this is from GOD, who hath planted theſe principles

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ples in our natures; or, which comes all to one, hath given us ſuch faculties, by the uſe and improvement of which, we may come to the knowledge of theſe principles: but it is not uſual in the phraſe of ſcripture, to attribute this natural knowledge in ſuch a peculiar manner to the Spirit of GOD.

When any man believes the matters of divine revelation, for inſtance, the doctrines contained in the goſpel; this faith is to be attributed to the Spirit of GOD; but not as immediately perſuading us of the truth of theſe doctrines, but by perſuading us, that the goſpel which contains theſe truths, is a divine revelation; or which is all one, that the LORD JESUS CHRIST, who delivered theſe doctrines to the world, was a divine perſon, and came from GOD: and if we once firmly believe and entertain this, that JESUS was the Meſſias, and ſent from GOD to acquaint the world with his mind and will; we can make no doubt of the truth of any thing which he hath delivered. So that the faith which the ſcripture doth in a peculiar manner attribute to the Spirit of GOD, is this perſuaſion, "That JESUS is the CHRIST;" that is, that he was the true Meſſias, and ſent from GOD.

So that the queſtion is, how the Spirit of GOD doth concur to the begetting of this faith or perſuaſion? or why this faith is in ſuch a peculiar manner attributed to the Spirit of GOD?

I anſwer, upon theſe two accounts.

Firſt, in reſpect of the outward evidence which the Spirit of GOD gives us to perſuade us to believe.

Secondly, in reſpect of the inward efficacy and operation of the Spirit of GOD upon the minds of men in believing.

Firſt, in reſpect of the outward evidence, which the Spirit of GOD gives us to perſuade us to believe.

And

And if this be not that which divines mean by the teſtimony of the Spirit in this matter, yet I think it is that which may moſt properly be ſo called. Now the Spirit of GOD did outwardly teſtify concerning JESUS, that he was the Meſſias, and came from GOD; and that the doctrine which he taught was divine.

1. In the voice from heaven, which accompanied the deſcending of the Spirit upon him, in the form of a dove, ſaying, "this is my beloved ſon, in whom "I am well pleaſed," Matt. iii. 17.

2. In thoſe miracles which CHRIST himſelf wrought by the Spirit of GOD; which were ſo eminent a teſtimony of the Spirit of GOD, that the reſiſting of the evidence of thoſe miracles, and the attributing of them to the devil, is by our SAVIOUR called a blaſphemy againſt the holy Ghoſt, and ſuch a ſin as ſhall never be pardoned; becauſe miracles being the higheſt atteſtation that can be given to the divinity of any perſon, or his doctrine; whoever reſiſts this evidence, reſiſts his laſt remedy; and ſuch a perſon muſt needs remain in his infidelity, becauſe there is nothing more that can be done for his conviction.

3. The third eminent teſtimony which the holy Spirit gave to CHRIST, was in the great miracle of his "reſurrection from the dead;" and hence it is that the great miracle of CHRIST's reſurrection, which was the higheſt atteſtation to the divinity of his perſon, and the grand confirmation to his doctrine, is frequently in ſcripture, in a moſt peculiar manner, aſcribed to the Spirit of GOD. Rom. i. 4. "And "was declared to be the Son of GOD with power, "according to the Spirit of holineſs." that is, by thoſe miracles which he wrought by the holy Ghoſt, and by his "reſurrection from the dead." And ſo

Rom.

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Rom. viii. 11. "the Spirit of him that raiſed up "CHRIST from the dead." 1 Pet. iii. 18. "Be- "ing put to death in the fleſh: but quickned by the "Spirit."

4. In the effuſion of the Spirit upon the apoſtles, who were to preach CHRIST and his doctrine to the world; and that it might carry it's evidence along with it, GOD poured forth his Spirit upon thoſe who were to be the publiſhers of it; by which Spirit they were endued with ſeveral miraculous powers and gifts, to convince the world of the truth of the doctrine which they preached. And with relation to this, I think, it is that the apoſtle ſaith, 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. "and my ſpeech, and my preaching was "not with enticing words of man's wiſdom; but "in demonſtration of the Spirit, and of power; "that your faith ſhould not ſtand in the wiſdom of "men, but in the power of GOD;" that is, they did not uſe human eloquence to perſuade men, but delivered the goſpel with all plainneſs: and that which made thoſe plain diſcourſes ſo powerful, were thoſe powerful demonſtrations of the divine Spirit, which appeared in thoſe miraculous gifts wherewith they were endowed. I am ſure Origen underſtands this text ſo. And ſo likewiſe the apoſtle, 1 Theſſ. i. 5. ſpeaks to the ſame purpoſe, that "the goſpel "came not unto you in word only; but alſo in "power, and in the holy Ghoſt, and in much aſſu- "rance;" that is, they did not only ſpeak words to men, but the doctrine which they preached, was atteſted in a powerful manner by the holy Ghoſt, in thoſe extraordinary gifts which were beſtowed upon them, which was a great evidence to their hearers, and gave them great aſſurance of the truth of what they delivered. I think this is the meaning of thoſe

two

two places; but I will mention two others which are more unqueſtionable, Acts v. 32. where Peter and the reſt of the apoſtles tell the high prieſts and their officers, what evidence they had for what they preached concerning the reſurrection and aſcenſion of CHRIST. "We are his witneſſes of theſe things; "and ſo is alſo the holy Ghoſt, whom GOD hath "given to them that obey him." Not only they themſelves had ſeen what they preached: but to confirm their teſtimony, the holy Ghoſt was poured fourth upon them in miraculous gifts. And Heb. ii. 3, 4. "how ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great "ſalvation, which at the firſt began to be ſpoken by "the LORD, and was confirmed unto us by them "that heard him; GOD alſo bearing them witneſs, "both with ſigns and wonders, and with divers mi-"racles, and gifts of the holy Ghoſt, according to "his own will?" So the holy Ghoſt gave teſtimony to the truth of the doctrine which the apoſtles preached, by thoſe gifts which he endowed them withal, and thoſe miracles which he enabled them to work.

And I doubt not but with relation to the teſtimony which the Spirit of GOD gave to CHRIST by the miracles he wrought by CHRIST and his apoſtles, I ſay, I doubt not, but that with relation to his teſtimony it is, that the apoſtle ſaith he was "juſtified "in the Spirit." 1 Tim. iii. 16. "Great is the "myſtery of godlineſs: GOD was manifeſt in the "fleſh, juſtified in the Spirit." That is, the miraculous power of the Spirit which appeared in him, and did accompany his doctrine, did juſtify him to the world, and vindicate him from being an impoſtor and deceiver.

From all which it appears, that the teſtimony which

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which the holy Spirit gives to CHRIST and his doctrine, was the miracles which he and his apoſtles wrought by the Spirit of GOD: and if we will take our forms of ſpeaking from ſcripture, this is that which may moſt properly be called the teſtimony of the Spirit to the truth of the goſpel. But I deny not but beſides this outward evidence, which the Spirit of GOD gives to the truth of the goſpel, with reſpect to which the faith of the goſpel is in a peculiar manner attributed to the Spirit of GOD; there is likewiſe an inward efficacy and operation of the Spirit of GOD upon the minds of men. Therefore,

Secondly, faith is in a peculiar manner attributed to the Spirit of GOD, in reſpect of the inward efficacy and operation of the divine Spirit upon the hearts and minds of thoſe who ſincerely and effectually believe and entertain the goſpel; I ſay, who ſincerely and effectually believe and entertain the goſpel; that is, who ſo believe and entertain the goſpel as to obey it, and comply with it in their hearts and lives. For I doubt not but that there is ſo much evidence for the truth and divine authority of the goſpel, as is in itſelf ſufficient, without any peculiar operation of the Spirit of GOD, to ſilence all oppoſers, and to convince them ſo far as that they cannot have any ſufficient reaſon to diſbelieve it: but withal, I do not think that this faith doth become an abiding and effectual perſuaſion in any perſon, without the ſpecial operation of the holy Ghoſt. Now that the Spirit of GOD can work this effectual perſuaſion in the mind of man, cannot be doubted by any man who conſiders the vaſt power and influence which the Spirit of GOD, who made our ſouls, and knows the frame of them, can have upon the mind of man: all the difficulty is about the manner of it; how this faith is wrought

wrought in us by the Spirit of GOD. Now although it were ſufficient for us to know the thing, though we were ignorant of the manner how it is done, and we might very well reſt ſatisfied in this; that the Spirit of GOD works this faith in us, though we did not know how it does it; yet becauſe many have taken upon them to ſtate and determine the particular manner how it is done, it will be requiſite, in order to the rectifying ſome miſtakes about it, to enquire more particularly into this matter.

Now all the ways that have been aſſigned, or which, I think, we can eaſily imagine, may be reduced to one of theſe ſix heads. When we ſay the Spirit of GOD works faith in us, we muſt conceive it to be done, ſome or all of theſe ways.

1. By ſtrengthning the faculty, that is, raiſing and enabling our underſtanding to yield aſſent to the goſpel. Or,

2. By enlightening and diſcovering the object, that is, the concluſion to be believed.

3. By propounding to us the arguments, or evidence, whereby we may be perſuaded of it. Or,

4. By holding our minds intent upon this evidence, till it have wrought it's effect upon us. Or,

5. By removing the impediments which hinder our aſſent. Or,

6. By furthering and helping forward the efficacy of this perſuaſion upon our hearts and lives.

That the Spirit can work faith in us, any, or all of theſe ways, ſo far as they are conſiſtent with one another, I make not the leaſt doubt. For what man who believes the infinite power of the divine Spirit, can make the leaſt queſtion, whether it can raiſe and heighten our faculties above their natural and ordinary pitch? or whether it can diſcover an object to

us,

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us, with the greateſt clearneſs and ſatisfaction? or whether it can offer to our minds the beſt arguments, and the higheſt evidence that a thing is capable of? or whether it can hold our minds intent upon the conſideration of any thing? or whether it can remove all hindrances and impediments? or whether it can make the perſuaſion of any truth effectual? no man in reaſon can doubt of the poſſibility of theſe. But the queſtion is, what reaſon we have to aſſert this, or that particular manner? and what neceſſity and convenience there is from experience, or evidence of ſcripture, ſo to do?

Firſt of all, there ſeems no neceſſity of aſſerting the firſt; though I will not contend with any man that ſhall. For if this be true, that our underſtandings are naturally endowed with a ſufficient power to aſſent to any truth that is ſufficiently propounded to them; then there can be no neceſſity to aſſert, that the Spirit of GOD doth, in the work of faith, raiſe and elevate our underſtandings above their natural pitch. But I think it may eaſily be proved, that our underſtandings are naturally endowed with a ſufficient power to aſſent to any truth that is ſufficiently propounded to them; and that in ſuch a caſe nothing hinders the aſſent of men, but their own perverſeneſs and obſtinacy, which uſually proceeds from oppoſition of their luſts, or paſſions, or intereſt, to the truth which is propounded to them. For if men's underſtandings be not naturally endowed with a ſufficient power to yield aſſent to the goſpel, when it is ſufficiently propounded to them, how can it be men's duty to believe it? or what juſtice can condemn them for unbelief? But though there be no neceſſity of aſſerting, that GOD doth always ſtrengthen and elevate the underſtanding of thoſe

thoſe who believe; yet there is no reaſon to deny, but that GOD may do this when he pleaſeth, and poſſibly he often doth it. SERM. CCXXIII.

GOD is ſaid in ſcripture "to enlighten the eyes of "our underſtandings," which we may, if we pleaſe, underſtand in this ſenſe; although that may be done by propounding ſuch truths to us as we were ignorant of before, and could not have diſcovered, unleſs they had been revealed.

Secondly, the ſecond way whereby the Spirit of GOD may be conceived to work faith in us, is by enlightning and diſcovering the object, or thing to be believed. In the caſe we are ſpeaking of, the object, or thing to be believed, is the goſpel: now we may imagine the Spirit of GOD may work a faith or perſuaſion of this in us, by revealing or diſcovering to us this propoſition, that the goſpel is true. But this I need not ſpeak much to, becauſe I do not know any that pretend to have a particular and immediate revelation from GOD, that the goſpel is true. So that though GOD may do this when he pleaſeth, yet I do not know any who aſſert this to be the way whereby faith is wrought in men.

Thirdly, the Spirit of GOD may be conceived to work faith in us, by propounding and offering to us ſuch arguments and evidence, as are apt to perſuade us of the truth of the goſpel. And this the Spirit of GOD, which inſpired the writers of the ſcripture, doth mediately by the ſcriptures, and thoſe characters of divinity which are in the doctrines contained in them; and by thoſe miracles, which are there credibly related to be wrought by the Spirit of GOD, for the confirmation of that doctrine. And beſides this, the Spirit of GOD may, when he pleaſeth, and probably often doth, immediately ſuggeſt thoſe ar-

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guments to our minds, and bring them to our remembrance.

Fourthly, the Spirit of GOD may be conceived to work faith in us, by holding our minds intent upon this evidence, till it hath wrought it's effect upon us. And this I do not doubt, but the Spirit of GOD, out of his abundant grace and goodneſs to men, often doth; and I believe many men have found their minds kept intent upon ſuch conſiderations, as have mightily prevailed upon them, and been effectual to perſuade them to entertain and obey the goſpel; and muſt acknowledge that their minds were awakened by ſuch conſiderations, and made attentive to them, beyond their own inclinations to think upon ſuch things; and in ſuch a ſtrange and unaccountable manner, as they cannot in reaſon but attribute to ſome ſuperior influence, viz. to the holy Spirit of GOD.

Fifthly, by removing the impediments which hinder our effectual aſſent to the goſpel. And in this and the laſt particular, I conceive, the work of the Spirit of GOD in the producing of faith, principally to conſiſt; I ſay in theſe principally, not abſolutely excluding the former. The great impediment to the belief and entertainment of the goſpel, is the prejudice which the minds of men are apt to conceive againſt it, either upon account of their education in a contrary religion, or upon account of their luſts, or ſome worldly intereſt, to which the goſpel is oppoſite. Now theſe are ſo many bars upon the underſtandings of men, to keep out the truth from entering into them. The prejudice of a contrary education, is a monſtrous obſtacle to religion. When men have believed otherwiſe from their youth, and have had contrary principles implanted in them in their tender years, and have all their lives been poſ-

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est with contrary apprehensions of things; the clear- SERM. CCXXIII.
st truths that can be offered to them, come upon nfinite disadvantage; their understandings are tinc- ured, and put false colours upon every thing that s represented to them. And this was the case of the ews, when the Messias came; they were possest ith prejudices against his mean appearance, and had ashioned to themselves another kind of Messias, that hould be a glorious temporal prince; and had been brought up in this apprehension; and this made hem so invincibly obstinate against the reception of im; though the whole nation, when he came, were n expectation of him. And this was also the case f the Gentiles, when the gospel was first preached o them, they had been educated in a contrary reli- gion, and were possest with quite other apprehen- sions, which made the passage of the gospel infinitely difficult. And I doubt not but that in the first pub- lishing of the gospel, the Spirit did remarkably work upon the minds of men, for the removing of these prejudices, and thereby making way for the enter- tainment of the gospel. And though this prejudice be not now upon us in these parts of the world, who are brought up in the christian religion; yet the lusts and interests of men are now great obstacles to the effectual entertainment of the gospel; and the Spirit of GOD doth many times eminently appear in the restraining and conquering the lusts of men, and re- moving those other prejudices which hinder them from embracing the truth.

Sixthly, the last way whereby the Spirit of GOD may be said to work in us an effectual belief of the gospel, is by furthering, and helping forward the efficacy of this persuasion upon our hearts and lives, in the first work of conversion and regeneration, and

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in the progreſſive work of ſanctification afterward; both which the ſcripture doth every where attribute to the Spirit of GOD, as the author and efficient cauſe. The faith which "purifies the heart," and "conquers the world," and "works by love," hath this effect from the Spirit of GOD. Hence we are ſaid to be "ſanctified by the renewing of the holy "Ghoſt, and the belief of the truth," and "to be "kept by the mighty power of GOD through faith "unto ſalvation."

Thus I have ſhewn you, as briefly and clearly as I could, how the Spirit of GOD doth concur to the begetting of this divine faith and perſuaſion in us, and conſequently in what reſpects faith may be ſaid to be the gift of GOD. I ſhall only draw two or three inferences from this diſcourſe.

I. We may learn from hence to attribute all the good that is in us, or that we do in any kind, to GOD. Every good thing is from GOD; ſo St. James tells us, that "every good and perfect work comes "down even from the Father of lights." Much more are we to aſcribe to the free grace of GOD all the revelation of ſupernatural truth, which we cannot poſſibly come to the knowledge of, unleſs GOD of his free grace and goodneſs be pleaſed to diſcover it to us. And ſo likewiſe are we to aſcribe to GOD, and the operation of his holy Spirit upon our hearts, our belief of thoſe truths, and aſſent to them. Conſidering the corruption and degeneracy of human nature, and the oppoſition of the luſts and prejudices of men to divine truth, we ſtand in need of the grace of GOD, and the operation of his Spirit upon our hearts, to bring us to a firm aſſent to the goſpel: for as "fleſh and "blood could not reveal theſe truths to us," ſo neither is it very apt to aſſent to them when they are revealed.

In

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In the phraſe of ſcripture, all good is attributed to GOD; and all ſpiritual good to the holy Spirit of GOD working in us, and aſſiſting us to the doing of it. As on the other hand, the ſcripture attributes all thoſe ſins that are committed in the world, to the influence of evil Spirits. "He that committeth ſin "is of the devil." And though we do not know many times, how the Spirit of GOD worketh a good inclination in us, yet it is ſafe to follow the phraſe of ſcripture, and to aſcribe all good to GOD, as in ſome way or other the author of it.

II. This doth not excuſe the infidelity of men, that "faith is the gift of GOD." For though no man doth believe without ſome influence of the divine Spirit upon his heart, yet this does by no means excuſe thoſe who believe not, any more than it is an excuſe to the infidelity of men, that the ſcripture attributes it to the devil, as in ſome ſort the cauſe of it. He is ſaid "to blind the eyes of them that believe "not, leſt the light of the glorious goſpel of CHRIST "ſhould ſhine unto them." But the unbelief of men is a fault for all this; becauſe the devil cannot blind our minds, unleſs we conſent to it: he can only ſuggeſt falſe principles to us: but we may chuſe whether we will entertain them or not: he can only tempt us to reject the truth; but we may chuſe whether we will do ſo or not. In this we are faulty, becauſe we may reſiſt the devil, and quench or repel thoſe fiery darts which he caſts into our minds: but if we will conſent to his temptations, and ſuffer ourſelves to be blinded by him, the fault of our unbelief is our own, as well as his; and we are guilty of the infidelity which we ſuffer him to tempt us to.

So on the other hand, though "faith be the gift "of GOD;" yet thoſe that believe not are faulty

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upon this account, that they quench and reſiſt the bleſſed motions of GOD's Spirit, and the influence and operation of the Spirit of GOD, which accompany the truth of the goſpel to the minds of men, and produce their effect wherever they are not oppoſed and rejected by the prejudice and perverſeneſs of men.

III. Let us depend upon GOD for every good gift; and earneſtly beg the aſſiſtance and influence of his holy Spirit, which is ſo neceſſary to us to beget faith in us, and to preſerve, and to make it effectual upon our hearts and lives. Bread is not more neceſſary to the ſupport of our natural life, than the holy Spirit of GOD to our ſpiritual life.

For our encouragement to aſk this gift of GOD's holy Spirit, our SAVIOUR hath told us, that GOD is very ready to beſtow him upon us. No father upon earth is more ready to give bread to his children that cry after him, than GOD is to give his Spirit to thoſe that heartily and earneſtly beg it of him. So our SAVIOUR aſſures us, Luke xi. 11, 12, 13. "if a ſon "ſhall aſk bread of any of you that is a father, will "he give him a ſtone? or if he aſk a fiſh, will he "for a fiſh give him a ſerpent? or if he ſhall aſk an "egg, will he offer him a ſcorpion? If ye then, being "evil, know how to give good gifts unto your chil-"dren; how much more ſhall your heavenly Father "give the holy Spirit to them that aſk him?"

And now I have done with the firſt thing that I propounded, which was to open the nature of faith to you in general. I have been the longer upon this, becauſe I thought it very material, and important to the ſettling of right apprehenſions in us concerning religion, and divine things; and I have all along endeavoured to make things as eaſy and plain as the

nature

nature of the ſubject would permit. And though propably many things that I have ſaid, might not be within the full reach and comprehenſion of all capacities, yet becauſe I hoped they might be uſeful and beneficial to ſome at leaſt, I could not think the other conſideration a ſufficient reaſon why I ſhould wholly omit them, and paſs them by; remembring what St. Paul ſays, that "he was a debtor to the wiſe," as well as "the unwiſe." And St. Peter tells us, that St. Paul in his epiſtles wrote "many things, which were "hard to be underſtood" by ſome perſons; yet becauſe thoſe things might be of uſe to others, the Spirit of GOD did not think fit to omit the writing of them. What remains I ſhall reſerve for another diſcourſe, with which I ſhall conclude this ſubject.

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The efficacy, uſefulneſs, and reaſonableneſs of divine faith.

HEB. xi. 6.

But without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe GOD.

IN diſcourſing on theſe words, I have diſpatched the firſt thing which I propoſed, viz. to give an account of the notion and nature of faith in general; under which I have largely treated of a religious or divine faith in particular. SERM. CCXXIV. The ſixth ſermon on this text.

The ſecond thing which I propoſed, and to which I now proceed, is to confirm the truth of the propoſition which I laid down from the words, viz.

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that faith is the great principle of religion. I told you that theſe words, "without faith it is impoſſible "to pleaſe GOD," do not only imply that faith is a neceſſary condition, without which men cannot be religious: but likewiſe that it is a cauſe and principle of religion. Without faith a man cannot be religious: and where there is true faith, it will have this effect upon men to make them religious. Therefore I ſhall diſtinctly ſpeak to theſe two things.

Firſt, that without faith there can be no religion.

Secondly, that where there is a true faith, it will have this influence upon men to make them religious.

Firſt, that without faith there can be no religion. And this will appear by enquiring into the nature of all human actions, whether civil, or religious: and this is common to both of them, that they ſuppoſe ſome kind of faith or perſuaſion. All human actions have an order and reference to ſome end, and conſequently ſuppoſe ſome knowledge of the end, and of the means whereby it may be attained. So that unleſs a man do believe and be perſuaded that ſuch a thing is ſome way or other good for him, and conſequently deſirable and fit to be propounded as an end, and that this end is attainable, and the means which he uſeth are probable and likely for the attaining of this end, he will ſit ſtill and do nothing at all about it. So that without faith it is impoſſible to do any thing; he that believes nothing, will do nothing.

To inſtance firſt in civil actions, and the common affairs and concernments of life; all theſe are done by virtue of ſome faith or perſuaſion concerning them. For example, huſbandry, or merchandiſe; no man will apply himſelf to theſe, but upon ſome belief or perſuaſion of the poſſibility and neceſſity, or at leaſt uſefulneſs and convenience of theſe to the ends of life.

life. No man would plough or ſow, if he did not believe that there were ſuch a thing as the growing of corn, and that it is neceſſary for the ſupport of our lives, and if he were not perſuaded of the probability of reaping ſome fruit and benefit of his pains and induſtry. No man would traffick to Turkey or the Indies, if he did not believe there were ſuch places, and that they afforded ſuch commodities, and that he might have them upon ſuch terms as might recompenſe the adventure of his charge and pains. And ſo in all other actions of life. SERM. CCXXIV.

So it is in divine and religious things, nothing is done without faith. No man will worſhip GOD, unleſs he believe there is a GOD; unleſs he be perſuaded there is ſuch a being, which by reaſon of it's excellency and perfection, may challenge our veneration; and unleſs he believes the goodneſs of this GOD, that "he will reward thoſe that diligently ſerve "him." For all acts of religion being reaſonable, they ſuppoſe at leaſt an object and an end; that there is a GOD to be worſhipped, and that it is not in vain to ſerve him. This faith is neceſſary to natural religion. And in caſe GOD do diſcover and reveal his will to men, no man can obey the will of GOD, unleſs he be perſuaded that GOD hath ſome way or other made known his will; and be perſuaded likewiſe as to the particular inſtance wherein his obedience is required, that this is GOD's will. For inſtance, no man will obey the precepts of the bible as divine laws and commands, unleſs he be perſuaded that the doctrine contained in the holy ſcriptures is a divine revelation. So likewiſe no man can entertain CHRIST as the Meſſias and SAVIOUR of the world, and yield obedience to his laws, unleſs he believes that he was "ſent of GOD, and ordained

SERM. CCXXIV. "by him to be a Prince and a SAVIOUR." So that you ſee the neceſſity of faith to religion.

Secondly, I ſhall ſhew the influence that a divine faith hath upon men to make them religious. A true divine faith ſuppoſeth a man ſatisfied and perſuaded of the reaſonableneſs and neceſſity of being religious; that it is reaſonable for every man to be ſo, and that it is neceſſary to his intereſt. Now there needs no more to be done to put a man upon any thing, but to ſatisfy him of theſe two things; that the action you perſuade him to is reaſonable; that is, poſſible and fit to be done: and that it is highly his intereſt to do it; that is, if he do it, it will be eminently for his advantage; if he do not do it, it will be eminently to his prejudice, and he is a loſt and undone man. If you can once poſſeſs a man, that is in any degree ſober and conſiderate, with theſe perſuaſions, you may make him do any thing of which he is thus perſuaded. Now a true divine faith ſuppoſeth a man ſatisfied and perſuaded of all this.

1. Of the reaſonableneſs of religion. He that verily believes there is a GOD, believes there is a being that hath all excellency and perfection, that is infinitely good, and wiſe, and juſt, and powerful, that made and preſerves all things. Now he that believes ſuch a being as this, cannot but think it reaſonable that he ſhould be eſteemed, and honoured, and adored by all thoſe creatures that are ſenſible and apprehenſive of theſe excellencies; that ſeeing he is infinitely good, and the fountain of all being, and all the bleſſings we enjoy, we ſhould love ſo great a benefactor, and thankfully acknowledge his goodneſs to us; not only by conſtant praiſe of him, but by an univerſal obedience to his will, and a chearful ſubmiſſion to his pleaſure. For what more reaſonable than

than gratitude; that ſeeing he is infinitely wiſe and powerful, as well as good, we ſhould truſt in him, and depend upon him in all conditions, and ſeek to him for what we want. For what more reaſonable than to place our confidence in him, who is able and willing to do us good; and to ſue to him who knows our wants, and is ready to ſupply them? And ſeeing he is truth itſelf, and hath been pleaſed to reveal his will to us; what can be more reaſonable than to believe all thoſe diſcoveries and revelations, which GOD, "who cannot lie," hath made to us, and to comply with the intentions of them? And ſeeing he is the original pattern of all excellency and perfection, what can be more reaſonable than to imitate the perfections of the divine nature, and to endeavour to be as like GOD as we can? And theſe are the ſum of all religion. So that whoever firmly believes a GOD, and that he hath revealed and made known his will to the world, cannot but be fully ſatisfied and perſuaded of the reaſonableneſs and equity of religion, and all thoſe duties which religion requires of us; and conſequently of the poſſibility of performing all thoſe duties which religion requires of us, by the aſſiſtance of the grace and ſtrength which GOD is ready to afford us, if we beg it of him. For no man that believes the goodneſs of GOD (which every man does that believes a GOD) can think that he will make it our duty to do any thing which he hath left us in an utter impoſſibility of doing. SERM. CCXXIV.

2. A true divine faith ſuppoſeth a man ſatisfied and perſuaded of the neceſſity of religion; that is, that it is neceſſary to every man's intereſt to be religious; that it will be highly for our advantage to be ſo, and eminently to our prejudice to be otherwiſe; that if we be ſo, we ſhall be happy, if we be not, we ſhall

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ſhall be miſerable, and undone for ever. And every man that believes a GOD, and the revelations which he hath made, cannot but be fully ſatisfied of this.

'And this will appear upon theſe two accounts.

1. From the nature and reaſon of the thing. And,

2. From the promiſes and threatnings of GOD's word.

1. From the nature and reaſon of the thing. Every man that believes a GOD, muſt believe him to be the ſupreme good; and the greateſt happineſs to conſiſt in the enjoyment of him; and a ſeparation from him to be the greateſt miſery. Now GOD is not to be enjoyed, but in a way of religion. Holineſs makes us like to GOD; and likeneſs will make us love him; and love will make us happy in the enjoyment of him; and without this it is impoſſible to be happy. There can be no happineſs without pleaſure and delight; and we cannot take pleaſure in any thing we do not love; and there can be no love, without a likeneſs and ſuitableneſs of diſpoſition. So long as GOD is good, and we evil; ſo long as he is pure, and we unholy; ſo long as he hates ſin, and we love it; there can be no happy intercourſe, no agreeable communion, and delightful ſociety between GOD and us. So that if we be holy, happineſs will reſult from this temper; and if we be wicked, we are neceſſarily and unavoidably miſerable. Sin ſeparates between God and us, and hinders our happineſs; and it is impoſſible that a wicked man ſhould be near GOD, or enjoy him. GOD and a ſinner are ſuch two unequal matches, that it is impoſſible to bring them together; for "what fellowſhip hath "righteouſneſs with unrighteouſneſs? or what com-"munion hath light with darkneſs?"

2. Every man who believes the revelations which GOD hath made, cannot but be ſatisfied, how much religion

religion is his intereſt from the promiſes and threatnings of God's word. God in his word hath in plain and expreſs terms promiſed everlaſting glory and happineſs to them that obey him; and hath threatened wicked men with dreadful and eternal puniſhments; "to them that by patient continuance "in well-doing, ſeek for glory, and honour, and im- "mortality," he hath promiſed "eternal life: but to "them that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteouſ- "neſs," he hath threatned "indignation and wrath, "tribulation and anguiſh." Now if we believe the goſpel, which aſſures us of another life after this, and a future judgment which will determine all men to a ſtate of everlaſting happineſs, or miſery, we cannot but know it to be our intereſt, by all poſſible means to endeavour to attain the happineſs which God hath promiſed, and to avoid the miſery which he hath threatned. All men naturally deſire happineſs, and dread miſery and deſtruction; and theſe deſires and fears are intimate to our natures, and can never be ſeparated from them; becauſe they flow immediately from thoſe principles of ſelf-love, and ſelf-preſervation, which are deeply rooted in every man's heart, and are woven into the very make and frame of his nature, and will laſt as long as our beings. And ſo long as theſe principles remain in us, there is no man that is firmly perſuaded of the promiſes and threatnings of the goſpel, but muſt believe it to be his higheſt intereſt to be religious. Fear and hope are the two paſſions which govern us; hope is as it were the ſpur that quickens us to our duty, and fear is the curb that reſtrains us from ſin; and the greater the good hoped for, or the evil that is feared, the greater power and influence theſe paſſions have upon us. Now there cannot be a greater good, than com- SERM. CCXXIV.

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plete and everlaſting happineſs; nor a greater evil, than extreme and eternal miſery. So that whoever believes the promiſes and threatnings of the goſpel, hath his hope raiſed to the expectation of the greateſt good and happineſs in caſe of obedience; and his fears extended to the expectation of the greateſt evil and miſery in caſe of final impenitency and diſobedience. And a true divine faith doth contain in it both this hope and fear: for a faith in the promiſes of the goſpel is nothing elſe, but the hopes of eternal life; and a belief of the threatnings of the goſpel is nothing elſe, but the fear of hell and eternal miſery. So that a firm belief of the promiſes and threatnings of the goſpel, muſt needs have as great influence upon men to make them religious, as the higheſt hopes and greateſt fears can have: and thoſe men that are not moved by the hopes of the greateſt good, nor by the fears of the greateſt danger, are not to be wrought upon in human ways, nothing will prevail with them.

Thus I have ſhewn you, what influence a divine faith hath upon religion; for as much as whoever believes there is a GOD, and that the ſcriptures are the word of GOD, is fully ſatisfied and convinced how reaſonable it is, and how much it is his intereſt to be religious. I come in the laſt place to the application of this diſcourſe.

Firſt, this ſhews why there is ſo little of true religion in the world; it is for want of faith, without which it is impoſſible for men to be religious. Men are not firmly perſuaded that there is a GOD; that there is a being above them that is omniſcient, and knows every thing that they do, and takes notice of every word, and thought, and action; that is ſo good, and ſo powerful, as to make thoſe happy that love and obey him; and ſo juſt and powerful, as to make

make thoſe miſerable who hate him, and rebel againſt him. Men are not perſuaded that their ſouls are immortal; and that there is another life after this, in which men ſhall be happy or miſerable to all eternity, according as they demean themſelves in this world. Men are not firmly perſuaded that the ſcriptures are the word of GOD, and that the precepts and prohibitions of the bible are the laws of a great King, who will amply reward the obſervance of his laws, and ſeverely vindicate the breach and violation of them. Men do not believe that the promiſes and threatnings of GOD's word are true, and that every jot and tittle of them ſhall be accompliſhed. For did men believe theſe things, they would be religious; they would not dare to live in any known ſin or impiety of life: unleſs we can preſume that a man can be ſeriouſly unwilling to be happy, and have a longing deſire to be miſerable and undone for ever. For whoever believes the principles of religion, and the precepts, and promiſes, and threatnings that are contained in this holy book, and yet after all this can continue in ſin, he muſt not only put off the principles of a reaſonable creature, but muſt quit the very inclinations of his nature; that is, he muſt knowingly refuſe that which he naturally deſires, which is happineſs; and muſt embrace that which of all things that can be imagined he moſt abhors, and that is miſery. SERM. CCXXIV.

So that if men were verily perſuaded, that the great, and holy, and juſt GOD looks continually upon them, and that it is impoſſible to hide from him any thing that we do, they would not dare to commit any ſin in his ſight, and under the eye of him who is their Father and maſter, their ſovereign and their judge, their friend and benefactor, who is inveſted with

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with all theſe titles, and ſtands to us in all theſe relations, which may challenge reverence and reſpect. Did men believe the holineſs and juſtice of GOD, that he hates ſin and will not let it go unpuniſhed, would they venture to make him a witneſs of their wickedneſs, who they believe will be the avenger of it? Did men believe that they ſhall live for ever, and that after this ſhort life is ended, they muſt enter upon eternity; that when they leave the world, there are but two ways which all men muſt go, either into life everlaſting, or into eternal and intolerable torments; did men believe this, would they not with all poſſible care and diligence endeavour to attain the one, and avoid the other? Were men poſſeſt with a belief of eternity, how would they diſpiſe temporal and tranſitory things? how would they neglect the concernments of this life, and overlook the little impertinencies of time, and refer all their thoughts, and cares, and endeavours to eternity? this great and important intereſt would ſo fill their minds, and take up their thoughts, and employ their utmoſt cares, and endeavours, and diligence, that they would ſcarce regard, or ſpeak, or think of any thing elſe; they would be reſtleſs and impatient, till they had ſecured this grand affair and concernment; they would ſubordinate all the intereſts of this world to that of the other, and make all the concernments of time to ſtoop to the grand concernment of eternity. Thus men would do, were they but firmly perſuaded that there is another life after this, to which this bears no proportion.

Did men believe the ſcriptures to be the word of GOD, and to contain matters of the higheſt importance to our everlaſting happineſs; would they neglect it and lay it aſide, and ſtudy it no more than a

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man would do an almanac out of date, or than a man, who believes the attaining the philoſopher's ſtone to be impoſſible, would ſtudy thoſe books that treat of it? If men did believe that it contains plain and eaſy directions for the attaining of eternal happineſs, and eſcaping eternal miſery; they would converſe much with it, make it their companion and their counſellor, "meditate in it day and night," read it with all diligence; and put in practice the directions of it.

So that whatever men pretend, it is plain, that thoſe who neglect GOD and religion, and contradict the precept of his word by their lives, they do not firmly believe there is a GOD, nor that this book is the word of GOD. If this faith and perſuaſion were firmly rooted in men, they could not live wickedly. For a man that deſires happineſs, can no more neglect thoſe means which he is convinced are neceſſary for the obtaining of it; than a man that deſires life can neglect the means which he knows to be neceſſary for the preſervation of it.

Secondly, if faith have ſo great an influence upon religion, then the next uſe ſhall be to perſuade men to believe. No man can be religious that doth not believe theſe two things.

Firſt, the principles of natural religion; that there is a GOD; that his ſoul is immortal; and that there are future rewards.

Secondly, that the ſcriptures are the word of GOD; or, which comes all to one, that the doctrine contained in them is a divine revelation. Therefore whoever would perſuade men to be religious, he muſt begin here; and whoever would improve men in religion and holineſs, he muſt labour to ſtrengthen this principle of faith. Faith is the root of all other

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graces; and they will flouriſh, or decay, according to the degrees of our faith. Now he that would perſuade a man, or prevail with him to do any thing, muſt do it one of theſe three ways; either by entreaty, or authority, or argument: either he muſt entreat him as a friend, or command him as ſubject to him and under his power, or convince him as a man. Now he that ſhould go about to entreat men to believe any thing, or to charge them ſo to do, before he hath convinced them by ſufficient arguments, that it is reaſonable to do ſo, would, in my opinion, take a prepoſterous courſe. He that entreats or chargeth a man to do any thing, ſuppoſeth that he can do the thing if he will: but a man cannot believe what he will; the nature of a human underſtanding is ſuch, that it cannot aſſent without evidence, nor believe any thing to be true, unleſs it ſee reaſon ſo to do, any more than a man can ſee a thing without light. So that if the deareſt friend that I have in the world ſhould beg of me with the greateſt importunity; or any man, that hath the greateſt authority over me, ſhould lay his ſevereſt commands upon me to believe a thing, for which I ſee no reaſon, I could not do it; becauſe nothing can command aſſent, but evidence. So that he that would perſuade men to believe either the principles of natural religion, or any divine revelation, muſt convince them of the truth of them: for it is unreaſonable to deſire a man to believe any thing, unleſs I give him good reaſon why he ſhould.

And this being the proper courſe which is to be taken, there are two ſorts of perſons to whom I ſhall apply myſelf in this exhortation: thoſe who do not believe theſe things; and thoſe who are perſuaded of them: to the former, in order to the begetting of faith

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in them; to the latter, in order to the ſtrengthening and confirming of their faith. SERM. CCXXIV.

Thoſe who do not believe are of two ſorts: either ſuch as do poſitively diſbelieve theſe things and make it their buſineſs to arm themſelves againſt them with all the arguments they can; who are ſo far from believing a GOD, or any divine revelation, that they endeavour to perſuade themſelves of the contrary, that there is no ſuch thing; or elſe they are ſuch as are indifferent about theſe matters. They have received the principles of religion by their education, and they have nothing to ſay againſt them, nor for them; they never conſidered them, nor the proper conſequences of them; they neither believe, nor diſbelieve them upon any reaſonable account.

Now all theſe are to be dealt withal in the ſame way: for whatever will convince the diſbeliever, will much more perſuade the indifferent, and confirm the weak. For faith is to be ſtrengthened by the ſame arguments by which it is wrought. Therefore I ſhall apply myſelf to convince unbelievers; and every one may apply thoſe arguments which I uſe to this purpoſe, for the ſtrengthening of their own faith.

But before I come to thoſe arguments, I intend to offer for the conviction of thoſe who do not believe, I think it convenient to endeavour, if poſſible, to remove a violent, and, I think, unreaſonable prejudice which men have received againſt all thoſe who endeavour to make religion reaſonable. As if Bellarmine had been in the right, when he ſaid "that faith was "rather to be defined by ignorance than by know-"ledge." The plain engliſh of which is, that it is for want of underſtanding that men believe the goſpel; and if the world were but a little more knowing and wiſe, no body would be a Chriſtian. I know

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not how it comes to paſs, whether through the artifice of the popiſh party, who "hate the light, leſt it "ſhould reprove them, and make them manifeſt;" or through the ignorance of too many well-meaning proteſtants; I ſay, I know not how it comes to paſs, but ſo it is, that every one that offers to give a reaſonable account of his faith, and to eſtabliſh religion upon rational principles, is preſently branded for a Socinian; of which we have a ſad inſtance in that incomparable perſon Mr. Chillingworth, the glory of this age and nation, who for no other cauſe, that I know of, but his worthy and ſucceſsful attempts to make chriſtian religion reaſonable, and to diſcover thoſe firm and ſolid foundations upon which our faith is built, hath been requited with this black and odious character. But if this be Socinianiſm, for a man to enquire into the grounds and reaſons of chriſtian religion, and to endeavour to give a ſatisfactory account why he believes it, I know no way but that all conſiderate, inquiſitive men, that are above fancy and enthuſiaſm, muſt be either Socinians or atheiſts.

I cannot imagine how men can do greater diſſervice to religion, than by taking it off from the rational and ſolid baſis upon which it ſtands, and bearing the world in hand, that men ought to believe without reaſon: for this is to turn faith into credulity, and to level chriſtian religion with the vileſt and moſt groundleſs enthuſiaſms that ever were in the world. Indeed if we had only to deal with Henry Nicholas and Jacob Behman, who fight againſt us in the dark, not with reaſons and arguments, but with inſignificant words and obſcure phraſes; we might make a ſhift to bear up againſt them with this principle, and we might charge them to believe us, as they do us to believe them, without giving them

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r reaſon for it: but if we are to deal with Celſus, SERM. CCXXIV.
Julian, or Porphyry, or ſome of our modern a-
iſts, we ſhould ſoon find how vain it would be
go about to cajole them with phraſes, and to gain
m over to chriſtianity, by telling them that they
ſt deny their reaſon, and lay aſide their under-
ndings, and believe they know not why. If the
at pillars of chriſtianity, the ancient fathers, had
en this courſe in their apologies for chriſtian reli-
n, it had never triumphed over judaiſm and pa-
iſm, as it did; and whoever hath read over thoſe
enſes and vindications of chriſtian religion againſt
vs and heathens, which were written in the firſt
s of the church, eſpecially the books of Origen
inſt Celſus, and Euſebius his book *De demonſt.*
l *Præparat. evangel.* ſhall find that they did very
citouſly endeavour to ſatisfy the world by all ra-
nal ways, both of the truth and reaſonableneſs of
iſtian religion. And if that was a good way then,
s ſo now; and never more neceſſary than in this
:, which I fear hath as many atheiſts and infidels,
t go under the name of Chriſtians, as ever were
any age ſince chriſtian religion was firſt planted in
: world.

But my deſign at preſent is not to perſuade men
rticularly to the belief of chriſtianity (that I intend
reafter, by GOD's aſſiſtance, to ſpeak to) but to
ſuade men to the belief of religion in general. So
t all I ſhall do at preſent, ſhall be, as briefly as I
, to offer ſome arguments and conſiderations to
ſuade men to the belief of the principles of natural
igion, and of the revelation which GOD hath made
his mind and will in the holy ſcriptures.

I. To perſuade men to believe the principles of na-
al religion; ſuch as the being of a GOD; the im-

SERM. CCXXIV. mortality of the ſoul; and future rewards after this life. I ſhall offer theſe two conſiderations.

Firſt, that it is moſt reaſonable ſo to do.

Secondly, that it is infinitely moſt prudent.

I. As to the being of GOD. Do but conſider theſe two things, which are undeniable; that there is a world, however it came; and that mankind do generally conſent in a confident perſuaſion that there is a GOD, whatever be the cauſe of it. Now theſe two things being certain, and not liable to any queſtion, let us enquire whether a reaſonable account can be given of theſe without a GOD.

1. Suppoſing there be no GOD, how came this vaſt and orderly frame of the world! There are but two ways that can be imagined. Either it was from eternity always of itſelf; or it became ſome time to be. That it ſhould be always of itſelf; though it may be imagined of the heavens and the earth, which as to the main are permanent, and continue the ſame; yet in things that ſucceed one after another, it is altogether unimaginable. As in the generation of men, there can be no doubt, whether every one of them was from another, or ſome of themſelves. Some of them muſt be of themſelves: for whatever number of cauſes be imagined in orderly ſucceſſion, ſome of them muſt have no cauſe, but be of themſelves. Now that which is of itſelf, and the cauſe of all others, is the firſt. So that there muſt be a firſt man; and the age of man being finite, this firſt man muſt have a beginning. So, that an infinite ſucceſſion of men ſhould have been, is impoſſible; and conſequently, that men were always. But I need not inſiſt much upon this, becauſe few or none of our modern atheiſts pitch upon this way. Beſides that Ariſtotle, who is reputed the great aſſerter of the

eternity

eternity of the world, doth acknowledge an infinite progreſs and ſucceſſion of cauſes to be one of the greateſt abſurdities. SERM. CCXXIV.

Suppoſe then the world began ſome time to be; it muſt either be made by counſel and deſign, that is, produced by ſome being that knew what it did, that did contrive and frame it as it is; which it is eaſy to conceive a being that is infinitely good, and wiſe, and powerful, might do; but this is to own a GOD: or elſe the matter of it being ſuppoſed to have been always, and in continual motion and tumult, it at laſt happened to fall into this order, and the parts of matter, after various agitations, were at length entangled and knit together in this order, in which we ſee the world to be. But can any man think this reaſonable to imagine, that in the infinite variety which is in the world, all things ſhould happen by chance, as well and as orderly as the greateſt wiſdom could have contrived them? Whoever can believe this, muſt do it with his will, and not with his underſtanding.

But ſeeing it muſt be granted, that ſomething is of itſelf, how eaſy is it to grant ſuch a being to be of itſelf, as hath other perfections proportionable to neceſſary exiſtence; that is infinitely good, and wiſe, and powerful? and there will be no difficulty in conceiving how ſuch a being as this could make the world.

2. This likewiſe is undeniable, that mankind do generally conſent in a confident perſuaſion that there is a GOD, whatever was the cauſe of this. Now the reaſon of ſo univerſal a conſent in all places and ages of the world, muſt be one, and conſtant: but no one and conſtant reaſon of this can be given, unleſs it be from the frame and nature of man's mind and underſtanding,

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ſtanding, which hath the notion of a Deity ſtampt upon it; or, which is all one, hath ſuch an underſtanding, as will in it's own free uſe and exerciſe find out a GOD. And what more reaſonable than to think, that if we be God's workmanſhip, he ſhould ſet this mark of himſelf upon us, that we might know to whom we belong? and I dare ſay, that this account muſt be much more reaſonable and ſatisfactory to any indifferent man, than to reſolve this univerſal conſent into tradition, or ſtate-policy, both which are liable to inexplicable difficulties, as I have elſewhere ſhewn at large *.

II. As to the immortality of the ſoul. Suppoſing a GOD, who is an infinite Spirit; it is eaſy to imagine the poſſibility of a finite ſpirit; and ſuppoſing the goodneſs of GOD, no man can doubt, but that when he made all things, he would make ſome beſt; and the ſame goodneſs which moved him to make things, would be a reaſon to continue thoſe things for the longeſt duration they are capable of.

III. As to future rewards. Suppoſing the holineſs and juſtice of GOD, that "he loves righteouſneſs, "and hates iniquity;" and that he is the magiſtrate and governor of the world, and concerned to countenance goodneſs, and diſcourage ſin; and conſidering the promiſcuous diſpenſation of his providence in this world, and "how all things happen alike to "all;" it is moſt reaſonable to conclude, that after this life, men ſhall be puniſhed and rewarded.

Secondly, it is infinitely moſt prudent. In matters of great concernment a prudent man will incline to the ſafeſt ſide of the queſtion. We have conſidered which ſide of theſe queſtions is moſt reaſonable:

* See vol. I. ſerm. I. where the arguments here briefly named, are handled at large.

let

let us now think which is ſafeſt. For it is certainly moſt prudent to incline to the ſafeſt ſide of the queſtion. Suppoſing the reaſons for, and againſt the principles of religion were equal, yet the danger and hazard is ſo unequal, as would ſway a prudent man to the affirmative. Suppoſe a man believe there is no GOD, nor life after this; and ſuppoſe he be in the right, but not certain that he is (for that, I am ſure, in this caſe is impoſſible) all the advantage he hath by this opinion, relates only to this world and this preſent time: for he cannot be the better for it when he is not. Now what advantage will it be to him in this life? he ſhall have the more liberty to do what he pleaſeth; that is, it furniſheth him with a ſtronger temptation to be intemperate, and luſtful, and unjuſt; that is, to do thoſe things which prejudice his body and health, which cloud his reaſon, and darken his underſtanding, which will make him enemies in the world, and will bring him into danger. So that it is no advantage to any man to be vicious: and yet this is the greateſt uſe that is made of atheiſtical principles; to comfort men in their vicious courſes. But if thou haſt a mind to be virtuous, and temperate, and juſt, the belief of the principles of religion will be no obſtacle, but a furtherance to thee in this courſe. All the advantage a man can hope for by diſbelieving the principles of religion, is to eſcape trouble and perſecuction in this world, which may happen to him on account of religion. But ſuppoſing there be a GOD, and a life after this; then what a vaſt difference is there of the conſequences of theſe opinions! as much as between finite and infinite, time and eternity.

Secondly, to perſuade men to believe the ſcriptures, I only offer this to men's conſideration. If there be

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a God, whoſe providence governs the world and all the creatures in it, is it not reaſonable to think that he hath a particular care of men, the nobleſt part of this viſible world? and ſeeing he hath made them capable of eternal duration? that he hath provided for their eternal happineſs, and ſufficiently revealed to them the way to it, and the terms and conditions of it? Now let any man produce any book in the world that pretends to be from God, and to do this; that for the matter of it is ſo worthy of God, the doctrines whereof are ſo uſeful, and the precepts ſo reaſonable, and the arguments ſo powerful, the truth of all which was confirmed by ſo many great and unqueſtionable miracles, the relation of which hath been tranſmitted to poſterity in public and authentic records, written by thoſe who were eye and ear witneſſes of what they wrote, and free from ſuſpicion of any worldly intereſt and deſign; let any produce a book like this, in all theſe reſpects; and which, over and beſides, hath by the power and reaſonableneſs of the doctrines contained in it, prevailed ſo miraculouſly in the world, by weak and inconſiderable means, in oppoſition to all the wit and power of the world, and under ſuch diſcouragements, as no other religion was ever aſſaulted with; let any man bring forth ſuch a book, and he hath my leave to believe it as ſoon as the bible. But if there be none ſuch, as I am well aſſured there is not, then every one that thinks God hath revealed himſelf to men, ought to embrace and entertain the doctrine of the holy ſcriptures, as revealed by God.

And now having preſented men with ſuch arguments and conſiderations as are proper, and I think ſufficient to induce belief, I think it not unreaſonable to entreat and urge men diligently and impartially

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to conſider theſe matters; and if there be weight in theſe conſiderations to ſway reaſonable men, that they would not ſuffer themſelves to be biaſſed by prejudice, or paſſion, or intereſt, to a contrary perſuaſion. Thus much I may with reaſon deſire of men: for though men cannot believe what they will, yet men may (if they will) conſider things ſeriouſly and impartially, and yield or with-hold their aſſent, as they ſhall ſee cauſe, after a thorough ſearch and examination. SERM. CCXXIV.

If any man will offer a ſerious argument againſt any of the principles of religion, and will debate the matter ſoberly, as one that conſiders the infinite conſequences of things one way or other, and would gladly be ſatisfied; he deſerves to be heard what he can ſay: but if a man will turn religion into raillery, and confute it by two or three bold jeſts; he doth not make religion, but himſelf ridiculous, in the opinion of all conſiderate men, becauſe he ſports with his life.

So that it concerns every man that would not triſle away his ſoul, and fool himſelf into irrecoverable miſery, with the greateſt ſeriouſneſs to enquire into theſe things, whether they be ſo or no, and patiently to conſider the arguments that are brought for them.

And when you are examining theſe matters, do not take into conſideration any ſenſual or worldly intereſt; but deal fairly and impartially with yourſelves. Think with yourſelves, that you have not the making of things true or falſe; that the principles of religion are either true or falſe, before you think of them. The truth of things is already fixed; either there is a GOD, or no GOD; either your ſouls are immortal, or they are not; either the ſcriptures are a divine revelation, or an impoſture; one of theſe is certain

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certain and neceſſary, and they are not now to be altered. Things will not comply with your conceits, and bend themſelves to your intereſts. Therefore do not think what you would have to be, but conſider impartially what is *.

And if upon enquiry, you be convinced that it is the greateſt reaſon and prudence to believe that there is a GOD, and a future ſtate, and that the ſcriptures are the word of GOD; then meditate much of theſe things; attend to the proper conſequences of ſuch a perſuaſion; and reſolve to live as becomes thoſe who believe there is a GOD, and another life after this, and that it is beſt for you to obey the precepts of his word, being perſuaded that whatever is there promiſed in caſe of obedience, or threatned in caſe of diſobedience, will certainly be accompliſhed.

And labour to ſtrengthen yourſelves in this belief; becauſe faith is the ſpring of all rational actions, and the root of all other graces; and according to the ſtrength and weakneſs of faith, your holineſs, and obedience, and graces will flouriſh or decay.

And becauſe the matters of faith do not fall under our ſenſes, and the things of another world are inviſible and at diſtance, and conſequently not ſo apt to effect us, as preſent and viſible things, we ſhould take the more pains with ourſelves, that by revolving frequently in our minds the thoughts of GOD, and repreſenting to ourſelves the happineſs and miſery of another world, they may have as great an effect upon us, as if they were preſent to us, and we ſaw them with our bodily eyes.

* Of this ſee more in the ſermon above mentioned.

SER.

SERMON CCXXV.

Of the chriſtian faith, the means of it's conveyance, and our obligation to receive it.

JOHN xx. 31.

But theſe are written, that ye might believe that JESUS *is the* CHRIST, *the Son of* GOD, *and that believing ye might have life through his name.*

SERM. CCXXV. The firſt ſermon on this text.

I Have largely diſcourſed concerning the general nature of faith, and more particularly concerning the faith which is truly divine and religious; in the latitude of which is contained a perſuaſion concerning the principles of natural religion, the being of GOD, the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate; and a perſuaſion of the divine revelation of the ſcriptures, and the matters contained in them. Now among matters of divine revelation, the doctrine of the goſpel is a principal part; which is the laſt and moſt perfect revelation which GOD hath made to the world, by his Son JESUS CHRIST; and a firm belief and perſuaſion of this is that which is called chriſtian faith, or "the faith of the goſpel;" and which, by way of eminency, is uſually called "faith" in the new teſtament.

Now chriſtian faith is not oppoſed to a divine faith, but is comprehended under it; as being a principal and eminent part of divine faith, but not all that which may be called divine faith. Chriſtian faith ſuppoſeth a belief of the principles of natural religion, and a belief of thoſe revelations which GOD formerly

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merly made under the old teſtament; but it doth only formally contain in it a belief of the goſpel, viz. that revelation which GOD hath in theſe laſt days made to the world by his Son JESUS CHRIST. The heathens who were deſtitute of divine revelation, did only believe the principles of natural religion, and the generality of them did not believe thoſe, but in a very imperfect manner. The "Jews, to whom "were committed the oracles of GOD," did ſuperadd to the belief of the principles of natural religion, the belief of ſuch revelations as GOD was pleaſed to make to them under that diſpenſation. Chriſtian faith ſuperadds to both the former, a belief of the revelation of the goſpel.

I ſhall now therefore, by GOD's aſſiſtance, endeavour to open to you the nature of chriſtian faith from theſe words; in which you have theſe three things conſiderable.

Firſt, the end of committing the goſpel to writing, which was to perſuade men to believe in CHRIST, to propagate and continue chriſtian faith in the world; "theſe things are written, that you might believe "that JESUS is the CHRIST, the Son of GOD:" and by faith to bring men to a participation of thoſe benefits, and the ſalvation which CHRIST was the author of; "and that believing, ye might have life "through his name. Theſe are written," ταῦτα "theſe," which may either refer to σημεῖα, "theſe "ſigns or miracles," referring to the former verſe, "and many other ſigns, &c." but "theſe ſigns," or "miracles are written" to confirm JESUS to be the perſon he pretended to be, the Meſſias, the Son of GOD, and conſequently to confirm the truth of the doctrine which he delivered; that by this confirmation, men might be induced to believe him to be

the

the true Meſſias, and to give entertainment to his doctrine. SERM. CCXXV.

Or elſe (which is very probable) the word ταῦτα may refer to the whole hiſtory of the goſpel, in which you have an account of the life of CHRIST, and the doctrine which he taught, and the miracles which were wrought for the confirmation of it. And ſo we may look upon theſe two verſes as a concluſion of the whole hiſtory of the goſpel writ by the four evangeliſts. For as for the chapter following, it ſeems not to be written by St. John himſelf, but by the church, probably as Grotius conjectures by the church of Epheſus, where he had reſided, and whom he had acquainted with the particulars which are there ſet down; the principle of which is, the prediction of our SAVIOUR concerning his long life, for the ſake of which the reſt of the ſtory ſeems to be brought in; which particular was not fit to be recorded till after his death; I ſay, it ſeems probable that St. John ended his goſpel here, and that the laſt chapter was added by others, as the laſt chapter of the pentateuch was added by ſome other after the death of Moſes; and the laſt chapter of Joſhua after his death. And this ſeems very evident from the 24th verſe of the chapter; where, after a relation of our SAVIOUR's prediction, concerning "the diſci-"ple whom JESUS loved," it is added, "this is the "diſciple which teſtified of theſe things, and wrote "theſe things" (that is the foregoing hiſtory of the goſpel) "and we know that his teſtimony is true;" which ſeems plainly to be ſpoken by ſome other perſons: for it were improper for him to ſay this of himſelf, "we know that his teſtimony is true."

So that here ſeems to be the end of the hiſtory of CHRIST, which St. John wrote: and theſe two verſes ſeem

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ſeem to be the concluſion of the whole goſpel written by the four evangeliſts; and then the ſenſe of them will be this; "many other ſigns truly did JESUS in the preſence of his diſciples, which are not "written in this book;" that is, the diſciples were witneſſes of many other miracles which CHRIST wrought, which they did not think neceſſary to ſet down in this book, that is, in this hiſtory of CHRIST witten by the four evangeliſts: "But theſe are written, that ye might believe that JESUS is the CHRIST "the Son of GOD, and that believing, ye might have "life through his name;" that is, theſe things which are recorded in this hiſtory, this account which is here given of the life and actions and doctrine and miracles of CHRIST, is ſufficient to bring men to the faith of the goſpel, to ſatisfy men that CHRIST was the Meſſias, the Son of GOD, and conſequently that his doctrine is true.

And that this concluſion doth refer to the whole hiſtory of the goſpel written by the four evangeliſts, I am induced to believe upon theſe two accounts.

1. Becauſe St. John's goſpel doth not ſeem to be intended for a hiſtory of the life and actions of CHRIST: but an appendix to the hiſtory, which had been written before by the other evangeliſts, and to ſupply only what they had omitted. Therefore you ſhall find that he gives no account of the genealogy or birth of our SAVIOUR, nor of his ſermon upon the mount, which did contain the ſum of his doctrine, nor of any of his miracles or his other diſcourſes which are related by the other evangeliſts; nor doth he relate any more of the hiſtory of his life, than was juſt neceſſary to bring in, and connect thoſe things which he thought fit to ſuperadd to the former hiſtory. So that conſidering how defective this goſpel,

pel, taken by itſelf, is in the moſt eſſential parts of the hiſtory of the life, and doctrine, and actions of CHRIST; no man can think that St. John did intend this for a full and ſufficient account of the life and doctrine and miracles of CHRIST; or that upon this imperfect relation, in which he had knowingly omitted many of the moſt material and conſiderable things belonging to the hiſtory of CHRIST, he could expect that men ſhould receive full ſatisfaction concerning him. Therefore I think it is highly reaſonable, and almoſt neceſſary to conclude, that when he ſays, "theſe things are written, that ye might believe "that JESUS is the CHRIST, the Son of GOD;" he does not ſolely refer to the goſpel which was written by himſelf; but to the whole hiſtory of the goſpel, which was put together into one book or volume, which was completed by this appendix.

2. Another reaſon I have for this, which doth much ſtrengthen this conjecture, is what I find in Euſebius, in the 18th chapter of the third book of his hiſtory, where he tells us to this purpoſe, "That "St. John, who lived the laſt of the apoſtles, did "reviſe what they had written of the hiſtory of "CHRIST, and added his goſpel as an appendix to "the reſt."

I have inſiſted the longer upon this, that no man might think, when St. John ſays, "theſe things "were written that ye might believe," that his goſpel taken alone and by itſelf is a ſufficient account of CHRIST, and contains all that was requiſite to bring men to believe on him. This is the firſt thing in the words, the end of committing the goſpel to writing.

Secondly, you have here the nature of chriſtian faith deſcribed; it is "believing that JESUS is the "CHRIST, the Son of GOD;" that is, that he is

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the true Meſſias propheſied of in the old teſtament, and promiſed as the SAVIOUR of the world; and that he is the Son of GOD, who came from the Father into the world, and took our nature upon him, that he might teach us, and go before us in the way to eternal happineſs.

Thirdly, The bleſſed effect of this faith, or the benefit that redounds to us upon believing, "that "believing, ye might have life through his name;" that is, that upon theſe terms and conditions, you might be made partakers of all thoſe bleſſings and benefits which CHRIST, the SAVIOUR of the world hath purchaſed for us, which are here ſet forth to us in the name of life; it being uſual in the phraſe of ſcripture, to expreſs to us thoſe things which are moſt excellent and deſirable by life. Now the principal benefits which CHRIST hath purchaſed, and which in ſcripture we are ſaid to be made partakers of by believing, are regeneration, juſtification or pardon of ſin, and eternal life and ſalvation; and the two firſt of theſe, as well as the laſt, are called life in ſcripture. Regeneration, (in which I include the continuance and progreſs of this work, which is ſanctification) that is, a new life, Rom. iv. 4. it is called "newneſs of life." And we are ſaid to have this life by faith, Gal. ii. 20. "And the life which I now "live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of "GOD." And Col. ii. 12. "buried with him in "baptiſm, wherein alſo you are riſen with him;" that is, regenerated and born to a new life. How? "by the faith of the operation of GOD, who hath "raiſed him from the dead;" that is, by believing the power of GOD, who raiſed up CHRIST from the dead, for the confirmation of the truth of the goſpel, 1 John v. 1. "whoſoever believeth that Jeſus

"is

"is the CHRIST, is born of GOD." So likewiſe juſtification is called life. While we are under ſentence of condemnation, we are dead in law: but being juſtified and pardoned, we are reſtored to life. So the apoſtle expreſſeth it, Rom. v. 18. "ſo by "the righteouſneſs of one, the free gift came upon "all men unto juſtification of life." And that we are "juſtified by faith," the ſcripture tells us ſo frequently, that I ſhall not cite any texts for it.

And then eternal life and ſalvation; and this is the conſummation of all, and I doubt not but is here principally intended in the text by the word life. So that the meaning of this expreſſion, "that believing, "ye might have life through his name," is, that by the faith of the goſpel, ye might be renewed, and pardoned, and ſaved; though I think that the laſt, viz. eternal life and ſalvation is principally, though not ſolely intended, as will appear by comparing this place with theſe parallel text, John iii. 15. "That whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not "periſh; but have eternal life." And, ver. 36. "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlaſting "life." John v. 24. "He that heareth my word, "and believeth on him that ſent me, hath everlaſting life." 1 Pet. i. 9. "The end of your faith, "even the ſalvation of your ſouls."

Thus I have as briefly as I well could, explained to you the meaning of the words, which I have done the more fully, that you may ſee how theſe obſervations which I ſhall raiſe from them, are contained in them. The obſervations are theſe.

Firſt, that writing is the way which the wiſdom of GOD hath pitched upon, as the ſtanding way, to convey the knowledge of the goſpel to the world. "Theſe things are written."

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Secondly, that all things neceſſary to be believed in order to ſalvation, are contained in the goſpel. "Theſe things are written that ye might believe, "and believing might have life:" but if any thing neceſſary to be believed by Chriſtians, in order to eternal ſalvation, were omitted, then the goſpel would be written to no purpoſe, and would fail in the end for which it was written.

Thirdly, that the miracles related in the goſpel are a proper and ſufficient means, or argument, to bring men to chriſtian faith. For this is the narroweſt and moſt reſtrained ſenſe in which we can take the words; "theſe things," that is, "theſe miracles "are written that ye might believe, &c." Now if St. John by the Spirit of GOD did record miracles to this end, we may conclude that they are proper and ſufficient for this end.

Fourthly, that a credible hiſtory does give men ſufficient aſſurance of matter of fact, and ſuch as we may ſafely build a divine faith upon. For if theſe miracles were recorded for this end, "that men "might believe," then a credible hiſtory or relation that ſuch miracles were done, is ſufficient to aſſure us that ſuch miracles were wrought; and upon this aſſurance we may build our faith: otherwiſe it had been in vain to have recorded theſe miracles to this end.

Fifthly, that we are not now-a-days deſtitute of a ſufficient ground of faith; becauſe we have theſe writings credibly conveyed to us, which contain the doctrine of the goſpel, and the relation of the miracles written for the confirmation of it.

Sixthly, that men now-a-days, thoſe to whom the goſpel comes, are under an obligation to believe; or, which is all one, that now-a-days men may be guilty of

of ſuch a ſin as unbelief: for now-a-days we may have ſufficient grounds of faith. SERM. CCXXV.

Seventhly, that to "believe that JESUS is the CHRIST, the Son of GOD," is truly and properly chriſtian faith. This is the deſcription which is here given of it, that it is a believing, "that JESUS is "the CHRIST, the Son of GOD."

Eighthly, that to "believe that JESUS is the "CHRIST, the Son of GOD," is truly and properly ſanctifying, and juſtifying, and ſaving faith; by this faith we have life. "Theſe things are written that "ye might believe that JESUS is the CHRIST, the "Son of GOD; and that believing, ye might have "life through his name."

Theſe obſervations are all virtually contained in the words. The greateſt part of them I ſhall very lightly paſs over, and ſpeak but briefly to them, becauſe I intend mainly to inſiſt upon the two laſt; in the handling of which, I ſhall open to you the nature of chriſtian faith, and ſhew you, that the faith which is here deſcribed is that which is truly and properly juſtifying and ſaving.

Firſt, that writing is the way which the wiſdom of GOD hath pitched upon, as the ſtanding way of conveying the knowledge of the goſpel to the world. This is matter of fact, and for the proof of it we have the evidence of the thing. The goſpel *de facto* was written, and this writing is conveyed down to us, and is the inſtrument which GOD hath in all ages, ſince the apoſtles times, that is, ſince the eye and ear witneſſes of the miracles of CHRIST and his doctrine ceaſed, made uſe of to convey to the world the knowledge of the goſpel. And here it were proper to ſhew what advantage this way of conveyance of the goſpel hath above oral tradition; but that I have al-

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ready done in ſome former diſcourſes *, where I ſhewed at large, that this way of conveyance is a more univerſal and diffuſive, a more certain, and liable to leſs impoſture and falſification, a more equal and uniform, and a more human way of conveyance than oral tradition; ſo that I ſhall not inſiſt longer upon this.

Secondly, that all things neceſſary to be believed by Chriſtians in order to ſalvation, are contained in the written goſpel: or elſe how could St. John in reaſon ſay, that "theſe things were written," to this end, "that men might believe and be ſaved;" if theſe things be not ſufficient to this end? which certainly they are not, if any thing neceſſary to be believed in order to ſalvation be left out. The Papiſts being urged with this text, to prove the ſufficiency of the written word, in oppoſition to thoſe traditional doctrines which they pretend to be neceſſary over and beſides the written word, tells us, that St. John doth not here ſpeak of the doctrine of CHRIST, but only of his miracles; theſe were written to confirm our faith of the Meſſias; but the doctrine of CHRIST was not all written, but left to the apoſtles to be delivered by mouth to their ſucceſſors, and ſo down to poſterity. But I have ſhewn before, that the neceſſary doctrines of the goſpel, as well as the miracles, are comprehended in theſe things which St. John ſays "were written." Beſides that it will be very hard for any man to deviſe a convenient reaſon, why miracles, as well as doctrines, might not have been left to the apoſtles, to have been traditionally delivered down to poſterity without writing. For doctrines may as well be committed to writing, as relations of miracles: and miracles may be with as much

* See the foregoing ſermons in this vol.

much eaſe, and certainty, and convenience in all re- SERM. CCXXV.
ſpects, delivered down to poſterity by an oral tradition, as doctrines may.

Thirdly, that the miracles related in the goſpel are a proper and ſufficient means to bring men to chriſtian faith. That they are ſo, it is a good ſign that GOD did work them to this end, and afterward commit them to writing for this very reaſon, that the knowledge of them might be conveyed to poſterity, and there might ſtill remain in the world a proper and ſufficient argument to perſuade men to believe; and we may well imagine, that GOD would not do any thing, but what is very proper and ſufficient for it's end. Now that miracles were wrought by the divine power purpoſely to this end, and that they are in reaſon a very ſufficient atteſtation to a perſon, and confirmation of the doctrine which he brings, I have largely ſhewn elſewhere *; and that all along, both in the old and new teſtament, GOD did empower Moſes and the prophets, CHRIST and his apoſtles, to work miracles to bring men to faith, and that this was the principal argument whereby thoſe who did believe were wrought upon.

Fourthly, that credible hiſtory doth give men ſufficient aſſurance of matter of fact; and ſuch aſſurance as we may ſafely build a divine faith upon. We freely believe innumerable things, which are ſaid to have been done many ages before we were born, and make not the leaſt doubt of them, only upon the credit of hiſtory: ſo that if the relation of miracles be but granted to be a credible hiſtory, we may upon the credit of the relation, ſafely believe that ſuch miracles were wrought; and if ſuch miracles were wrought, we may ſafely believe the doctrine to be from GOD,

* See the foregoing ſermons in this vol.

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for the confirmation of which they were wrought; and conſequently a divine faith may be ſafely built upon ſuch an aſſurance of miracles, as we may have from a credible hiſtory and relation.

Fifthly, that we are not now-a-days deſtitute of a ſufficient ground of faith; becauſe the doctrine of the goſpel hath ſtill the ſame confirmation that it had, viz. miracles: only we who live at this diſtance from the time when, and the place where they were wrought, have the knowledge of them conveyed to us, and come to be aſſured of them in another way. Thoſe who lived in the age of CHRIST and his apoſtles had aſſurance of miracles from their own ſenſes; and we are now aſſured of them by credible hiſtory and relation. Now though theſe ways be not equal, yet they are both ſufficient to beget in us an undoubted aſſurance, and ſuch as no prudent man hath any reaſon to doubt of. For a man may be as truly and undoubtedly certain, that is, as well ſatisfied, that a thing was done, from the credit of hiſtory, as from his own ſenſes. I make no more doubt whether there was ſuch a perſon as Henry the VIII. king of England, than I do whether I be in this place.

Sixthly, that now-a-days thoſe to whom the goſpel comes are under an obligation to believe; or that now-a-days there is ſuch a ſin as unbelief of the goſpel. And I the rather note this, becauſe there are ſome well-wiſhers to atheiſm, who out of prudence and regard to their own ſafety, chuſe rather ſecretly to undermine religion, than openly to deny it. I grant indeed, that in our SAVIOUR's time, when ſuch great miracles were wrought, thoſe who ſaw thoſe miracles (which they think no body did) were under an obligation to believe, and guilty of a great ſin in not

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ot believing the goſpel: but now-a-days, when we
e no ſuch miracles wrought for the confirmation of
he goſpel, there lies no obligation upon any man to
elieve it; and that now there is no ſuch ſin as un-
elief. Now any man may with half an eye ſee the
onſequence of this aſſertion: for being once admit-
ed, it doth as certainly deſtroy chriſtian religion, as
f men ſhould deny that there was any ſuch perſon as
JESUS CHRIST, or that he ever wrought any mira-
les: for if to diſbelieve the goſpel be no ſin, and
onſequently brings a man into no danger; but on
he other hand dangers and perſecutions do attend
he belief and profeſſion of it; it were the greateſt
olly in the world for any man to believe; unleſs this
oſſibly may be greater, for a man who does believe
t, not to obey and live according to it. And if this
were true, it were the greateſt imprudence that can
e, for any man to be a Chriſtian. And if that were
nce admitted, there is all the reaſon in the world that
hriſtianity ſhould be baniſhed and extirpated, not only
s uſeleſs and impertinent, but as a thing dangerous
nd pernicious to the welfare of mankind.

I ſhall therefore briefly prove to you, that it is now one of the greateſt ſins that men are capable of (except the ſin againſt the holy Ghoſt) for thoſe who have the goſpel ſufficiently propounded to them, to diſbelieve it; I ſay, except the ſin againſt the holy Ghoſt, which our SAVIOUR tells us, was "blaſ-"pheming the Spirit of GOD," whereby he wrought his miracles, and ſaying it was the ſpirit of the devil; and this ſin men in a lower degree and proportion may now-a-days be guilty of: for as the Phariſees who ſaw the works that CHRIST did, and acknowledged them to be miracles, did commit the ſin againſt the holy Ghoſt, in aſcribing thoſe miracles

which

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which were really wrought by the power of the holy Ghoſt, to the devil; ſo men now-a-days, who own the hiſtory of CHRIST's miracles as true, may be guilty of the ſin againſt the holy Ghoſt, in a lower proportion, by maliouſly imputing thoſe miracles to the power of the devil.

But excepting the ſin againſt the holy Ghoſt, the greateſt ſin that men are now capable of, is to diſbelieve the goſpel when it is ſufficiently propounded to them. Now the goſpel is then ſufficiently propounded, when there are ſufficient grounds offered to perſuade men to the belief of it; and I have already proved, that we now have ſufficient ground to believe the goſpel; and if ſo, then whoſoever hath theſe grounds offered to him, is under an obligation to believe it: for every man is bound to believe that, for which he hath ſufficient ground and reaſon; and every man ſins who neglects his duty, that is, does not do that which he ſtands bound to.

And not only whoever diſbelieves the goſpel, ſins in ſo doing, but farther, he commits the greateſt ſin that now men are capable of. I ſay now capable of: for I doubt not but that it was a ſin of a higher degree, for thoſe who ſaw CHRIST's miracles to diſbelieve, than it is for us who have only the relation of them. For by the ſame reaſon that "he is more "bleſſed that believes, and hath not ſeen;" a greater curſe belongs to him, "who hath ſeen, and yet doth "not believe;" and conſequently ſuch a perſon is guilty of a greater ſin. But becauſe we cannot now ſee the miracles of CHRIST, the greateſt ſin that men in this age are capable of, is to diſbelieve the goſpel confirmed by miracles, whereof we are aſſured by credible relation. For the ſin of diſbelieving now hath theſe two aggravations.

1. It

1. It is a ſin againſt ſufficient light and evidence: nd in this it is equal to the ſins which are committed gainſt natural light.

2. It is a ſin againſt the greateſt mercies and leſſings that ever were offered to the world: and this it exceeds the ſins againſt natural light. Whoever diſbelieves the goſpel, he rejects the offer of ernal life and happineſs. And theſe two aggravaons the apoſtle puts together, Heb. ii. 3. "how ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation, which at the firſt began to be ſpoken by the LORD, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?" And if this be thus, it highly conerns us to enquire into the nature of this faith; and his brings me to the

Seventh obſervation, that to "believe that JESUS is the CHRIST, the Son of GOD," is truly and roperly chriſtian faith. But the conſiderations of this ſhall leave to the next opportunity.

S E R M O N CCXXVI.

Of the chriſtian faith, which ſanctifies juſtifies, and ſaves.

JOHN xx. 31.

But theſe are written, that ye might believe that JESUS *is the* CHRIST, *the Son of* GOD, *and that believing ye might have life through his name.*

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The ſecond ſermon on this text.

IN my former diſcourſe upon theſe words, I propoſed eight obſervations from them, ſix of which I have already diſpatched, deſigning to diſcourſe of the

SERM. CCXXVI. the remaining two more at large. I proceed therefore to the

Seventh obſervation which I laid down, viz. that to "believe that JESUS is the CHRIST, the Son of "GOD," is truly and properly chriſtian faith. This is the deſcription which is here given of chriſtian faith.

In proſecution of this, I ſhall do theſe two things.

Firſt, ſhew you what is included in believing "that "JESUS is the CHRIST, the Son of GOD."

Secondly, prove that this is truly and properly chriſtian faith.

Firſt, what is included in believing "that JESUS "is the CHRIST, the Son of GOD." It ſignifies a firm and effectual perſuaſion, that JESUS, that is, the perſon the hiſtory of whoſe life and death is related in the goſpel, "is the CHRIST," that is, the true Meſſias, promiſed and propheſied of in the old teſtament to be the SAVIOUR of the world; and that he is "the Son of GOD," that is, "the only begotten "of the Father," who was ſent by him into the world, and took our nature upon him, that he might purchaſe eternal happineſs for us, and inſtruct us, and go before us in the way to it. So that faith is a firm and effectual perſuaſion of, or aſſent to the whole goſpel. Faith ſignifies chriſtian religion, which comprehends an aſſent to the doctrine of the goſpel, and a ſuitable life and converſation.

I ſay, a firm perſuaſion of this; for in the phraſe of the new teſtament, none are accounted true believers, or ſaid to have a true faith in CHRIST, who do not firmly continue in this perſuaſion; and the owning and profeſſion of it, notwithſtanding all the ſufferings and perſecutions it might expoſe them to. And an effectual perſuaſion, for none are ſaid truly

to

to believe in CHRIST, who did not ſhew forth the proper and genuine effects of this faith, who do not live as they believe, and conform their lives to that doctrine, to the truth whereof they profeſs an aſſent.

And hence it is that true Chriſtians, that is, thoſe who did faſhion their lives according to the goſpel, are called believers, and the ſum of all chriſtianity is uſually contained in this word believing, which is the great principle of a chriſtian life; as in the old teſtament all religion is expreſſed by the "faith of GOD," ſo in the new, by "the faith in CHRIST."

Now whoſoever doth firmly and effectually entertain this truth, that that JESUS, whom the goſpel declares to us, is the true Meſſias, and SAVIOUR of the world, and the very Son of GOD, ſent by him into the world for this purpoſe, that he might by his doctrine inſtruct, and by the example of his life go before us in the way to eternal happineſs, and by the merit and ſatisfaction of his death and ſufferings appeaſe and reconcile GOD to men, and purchaſe for them the pardon of their ſins and eternal life, upon the conditions of faith, and repentance, and ſincere obedience; I ſay, whoſoever doth firmly and effectually entertain theſe truths will conſequently endeavour to obey the precepts of his doctrine, and to imitate the example of his life; and will expect ſalvation, that is, the pardon of his ſins, and etertal life from no other; becauſe he is verily perſuaded he is a teacher, and a SAVIOUR ſent from GOD, that his doctrine is true, and his ſatisfaction available, and that the rewards which he hath promiſed to thoſe who believe and obey him, and the puniſhments which he hath threatned to the unbelievers and diſobedient, ſhall all certainly be fulfilled and accompliſhed. All this is included in believing "that JESUS is the

"CHRIST,

SERM. CCXXVI. "CHRIST, the Son of GOD." So chriſtian faith, or the faith of the goſpel, contains plainly in it theſe particulars.

1. An aſſent of the underſtanding to this truth, that JESUS CHRIST, the Son of GOD, was a perſon commiſſioned from heaven, and employed by God to bring men to eternal happineſs. And this fundamental is neceſſary to all the ſubſequent acts of faith, and that upon which they depend.

2. An aſſent of the underſtanding to the truth of all thoſe things which this perſon delivered to the world. So that if he tells us, that his death hath made expiation for the ſins of men, upon the conditions of faith, and repentance, and obedience; and that GOD by him doth command the world to do ſuch and ſuch things, and in caſe of obedience will confer ſuch and ſuch rewards upon men, but in caſe of diſobedience will inflict ſuch puniſhments upon them; we are to believe all this to be true; becauſe the perſon who acquainted us with theſe things was ſent by GOD, and employed from heaven upon this meſſage.

3. And conſequently, a relying and depending upon him, and no other, for the conferring of theſe benefits, and making good theſe promiſes to us.

4. Obedience to all his laws and commands; becauſe believing them to be from GOD, we cannot but aſſent to them as good, and as laying an obligation upon us to yield obedience to them: and if we do not obey them, we are preſumed to diſbelieve them; for if we did truly and heartily believe them to be the commands of GOD, we would obey them.

Now that obedience of heart and life to the precepts and commands of the goſpel, as well as an aſſent of the underſtanding to the truth of the goſpel-revelation,

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revelation, and a truſting and relying upon the merits of CHRIST, is included in the ſcripture notion of faith, will evidently appear to any that will conſider theſe texts. Rom. i. 5. "By whom we have received grace and apoſtleſhip for obedience to the "faith among all nations for his name;" where the belief of the goſpel is called "the obedience of the "faith." Rom. v. 16. "But they have not all "obeyed the goſpel: for Eſaias ſaith, LORD, who "hath believed our report?" but if faith do not include obedience, how could he prove that there were ſome that did not obey the goſpel, becauſe Iſaiah ſaid, there were ſome that did not believe it? And ſo likewiſe by comparing, 1 Tim iv. 10. where he is ſaid to be "the SAVIOUR of them that believe," with Heb. v. 9. where he is ſaid to be the "author "of eternal ſalvation unto all them that obey him." As alſo by comparing Gal. v. 6. where it is ſaid, "for in JESUS CHRIST, neither circumciſion avail-"eth any thing, nor uncircumciſion; but faith which "worketh by love," with 1 Cor. vii. 19. "circum-"ciſion is nothing, and uncircumciſion is nothing; "but the keeping of the commandments of GOD." And ſo likewiſe by thoſe texts, where unbelief and diſobedience are equivalently uſed. I will but mention one, Heb. iii. 12. The apoſtle, from the example of the Iſraelites, cautions Chriſtians againſt unbelief; "take heed, brethren, leſt there be in any of "you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from "the living GOD." And repeating the ſame caution in the next chap. at the 11 ver. he varies the phraſe a little; "leſt any man fall after the ſame ex-"ample of diſobedience:" the word is ἀπειθείας, which indeed our tranſlators render unbelief, but that confirms that which I bring it for, that diſobedience

and

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and unbelief are the ſame. And ſo likewiſe we find faith and diſobedience oppoſed frequently in ſcripture. John iii. 36. "He that believeth on the Son "hath everlaſting life: and he that believeth not "the Son, ſhall not ſee life." In the greek it is, "he that obeyeth not the Son," as you will ſee in the margin of the bible. 1 Pet. ii. 7. "Unto you "therefore which believe he is precious; but unto "them which be diſobedient, the ſtone which the "builders diſallowed, the ſame is made the head of "the corner." And this doth likewiſe appear in all thoſe texts, wherein repentance, and our forgiving of others, and ſeveral other acts of obedience are made the conditions of our juſtification; or the omiſſion of them, ſins, as well as faith. So that we cannot be ſaid to be juſtified by faith alone, unleſs that faith include in it obedience. I have inſiſted the longer upon this, becauſe the right underſtanding the ſcripture-notion of faith in CHRIST doth very much depend upon this: and if this one thing, that the ſcripture-notion of faith doth include in it obedience to the precepts of the goſpel, were but well underſtood and conſidered, it would ſilence and put an end to thoſe infinite controverſies about faith and juſtification, which have ſo much troubled the chriſtian world, to the great prejudice of practical religion, and holineſs of life.

Secondly, that this is truly and properly chriſtian faith. Which I ſhall prove by theſe two arguments.

1. Becauſe it includes a belief of the whole goſpel, or of all the revelation which GOD hath made to the world by JESUS CHRIST. And certainly there cannot be a more proper notion of chriſtian faith, than to believe the revelation which GOD hath made by JESUS CHRIST: but to "believe that JESUS is the "CHRIST,

"CHRIST, the Son of GOD," doth include this. For whoſoever believes him to be the Meſſias, and the Son of GOD, believes him to have come from GOD, and to be authorized and commiſſioned by him to make known his mind to the world, and conſequently will believe whatever he delivers. For whoever believes the goodneſs and veracity of GOD, as every man does that believes a GOD, cannot but aſſent to the truth of every thing which he is ſatisfied comes from GOD.

2. That to "believe that JESUS is the CHRIST, "the Son of GOD," is truly and properly chriſtian faith, or the faith of the goſpel, will appear by conſidering how the ſcriptures of the new teſtament do conſtantly deſcribe to us the faith of the goſpel; and you ſhall find they do it, either by the very phraſe in the text, or other phraſes and metaphors equivalent to them; or elſe by a belief of that which is the great argument and confirmation of CHRIST's being the Meſſias, the Son of GOD. Very often the faith of the goſpel is deſcribed by the very phraſe in the text, "believing that JESUS is the CHRIST, and that "he is the Son of GOD." John iv. 41, 42. "And "many more believed, becauſe of his own word; "and ſaid unto the woman, Now we believe; not "becauſe of thy ſaying: for we have heard him our "ſelves, and know that this is indeed the CHRIST, "the SAVIOUR of the world." John vi. 69. "And "we believe and are ſure, that thou art that CHRIST, "the Son of the living GOD." John xi. 27. ſays Martha to CHRIST, "Yea, LORD, I believe that "thou art the CHRIST, the Son of GOD, which "ſhould come into the world." Acts viii. 37. "I "believe that JESUS CHRIST is the Son of God." 1 John iii. 23. "And this is his commandment, that

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" we ſhould believe on the name of his Son JESUS " CHRIST, and love one another, as he gave us " commandment", that is, that we ſhould believe on him under his name and title of " JESUS CHRIST, " the Son of GOD." 1 John v. 1. " Whoſoever " believeth that JESUS is the CHRIST, is born of " GOD." And ver. 5. " Who is he that over- " cometh the world, but he that believeth that JE- " SUS is the Son of GOD?" And ver. 10. " He " that believeth on the Son of GOD," that is, believeth JESUS to be the Son of GOD; and ver. 13. " theſe things have I written unto you that believe " on the name of the Son of GOD, that ye may know " that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe " on the name of the Son of GOD."

Sometimes the faith of the Goſpel is deſcribed to us by other phraſes that are tantamount to theſe; ſuch as ſignify that " he came from GOD, and was ſent " by him into the world," and was the Meſſias whom they expected. John iii. 2. Nicodemus deſcribes his faith in CHRIST thus, " I know that thou " art a teacher come from GOD." John vi. 29. " This is the work of GOD, that ye believe on him " whom he hath ſent," that is, that ye believe me to be ſent from GOD. John viii. 24. " For if ye " believe not that I am he, ye ſhall die in your ſins," that is, if ye believe not, that I am the Meſſias, whom you expect and look for. And ſo John xiii. 19. " that ye may believe that I am he." And John xi. 42. " that they may believe that thou haſt " ſent me." And John xvi. 30. " by this we be- " lieve that thou cameſt forth from GOD." And John xvii. 8. " they have believed that thou didſt " ſend me."

Sometimes the faith of the goſpel is expreſſed by meta-

ietaphors equivalent to theſe expreſſions, as by coming to CHRIST, and receiving him as the true Meſſias, in ſeveral places; and ſometimes by believing that which is the great argument and confirmation that CHRIST was the true Meſſias, the Son of GOD, that is, believing his reſurrection from the dead. Rom. iv. 24. "To whom it ſhall be imputed" for righteouſneſs, "if we believe on him that raiſed up JESUS our LORD from the dead." Rom. x. 9. "If thou ſhalt confeſs with thy mouth the LORD JESUS, and ſhalt believe in thine heart, that GOD hath raiſed him from the dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved." Col. ii. 12. "Through the faith of the operation of GOD, who raiſed him up from the dead." Where faith is deſcribed by a belief of the power whereby CHRIST was raiſed from the dead. And to mention no more, 1 Pet. i. 21. "who by him do believe in GOD, that raiſed him up from the dead." Now the reaſon why the faith of the goſpel is deſcribed by the belief of CHRIST's reſurrection is, becauſe whoever believes that CHRIST was raiſed from the dead, cannot but be ſatisfied, that his great miracle was a ſufficient atteſtation that he was no impoſtor, but that he was what he pretended to be, viz. the Son of GOD; and conſequently that he ought to be believed and obeyed in all things. And thus much may ſuffice to have ſpoken to this ſeventh obſervation.

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Eighth obſervation, that to "believe that JESUS is the CHRIST, the Son of GOD," is truly and properly ſanctifying, and juſtifying, and ſaving faith. So the text tells us, that this faith gives us life; "but theſe are written, that ye might believe that JESUS is the CHRIST, the Son of GOD; and that believing ye might have life through his name;"

SERM. CCXXVI. that is, as I explained this phraſe in the opening of the text, that upon theſe terms and conditions, ye might be made partakers of all thoſe bleſſings and benefits which CHRIST, the SAVIOUR of the world, hath purchaſed, which are here ſet forth under the name of "life;" it being uſual in the phraſe of ſcripture to ſet forth to us thoſe things which are moſt excellent and deſirable, by life, which men value above all other things. Now the principal benefits which CHRIST hath purchaſed, and which we are ſaid to be made partakers of by believing, are,

1. Regeneration, under which I include the continuance and progreſs of this work, which is ſanctification.

2. Juſtification, by which I cannot find that the ſcripture means any more than pardon or remiſſion of ſins.

3. Eternal life; and this I think is principally, though not ſolely intended here in the text, as I have ſhewn, by comparing the text with other paralled texts, in the ſame evangeliſt. John iii. 15. "That "whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, "but have eternal life." And ver. 36. "he that "believeth on the Son, hath everlaſting life." I ſay, I think eternal life is here principally intended, though this ſuppoſe the other, regeneration and juſtification, before we can attain it, which may alſo very well be included here in the term "life." My reaſons are theſe.

1. Becauſe I find in ſcripture, that regeneration and juſtification are expreſſed by the name of life, Rom. vi. 4. our regeneration is called "newneſs of "life," becauſe before, "we were dead in ſins and "treſpaſſes; and Rom. v. 8. juſtification is called "juſtification of life," becauſe while our ſins are unpardoned, and we are under the ſentence of condemnation,

nation, we are dead in law; but being juſtified and pardoned, we are, as it were, reſtored to life again. SERM. CCXXVI.

2. Becauſe in the phraſe of ſcripture we are ſaid to be regenerate, and ſanctified, and juſtified by faith, as well as ſaved. 1 John v. 1. "He that believeth "that JESUS is the CHRIST, is born of GOD." Gal. ii. 20. "The life which I now live in the "fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of GOD;" ſpeaking of the new life of ſanctification. And Col. ii. we are ſaid to be "riſen with CHRIST," that is, born to a new life, "by the faith of the operation of "GOD, that raiſed up JESUS from the dead;" and to be "juſtified by faith," in innumerable places. So that it is very probable upon theſe accounts, that the evangeliſt here, when he ſays, that "believing "you might have life in his name," doth intend to take in regeneration and juſtification, as well as eternal life, which is the conſummation of all the bleſſings of the goſpel. I come now to the obſervation, viz.

That this faith of the goſpel, which I have deſcribed, is truly and properly a ſanctifying, and juſtifying, and ſaving faith.

I. I ſhall ſhew that it is properly a ſanctifying faith.

II. A juſtifying and ſaving faith.

I. It is truly ſanctifying. I know that this term of a ſanctifying faith, is not much in uſe among divines, and therefore it may ſeem a little more ſtrange: but they might have uſed it, if they had pleaſed, for it is every whit as proper to call faith ſanctifying, as juſtifying or ſaving. It is true indeed, this expreſs term of a ſanctifying faith is no where in ſcripture; no more are the very terms of juſtifying and ſaving faith: but we are ſaid to be juſtified and ſaved by

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faith in ſcripture, which is as much as if the terms had been uſed. And we are ſaid alſo to be ſanctified by faith, as well as juſtified and ſaved. Acts xv. 9. our hearts are ſaid to be "purified by faith." And ſo likewiſe our "victory over the world," that is, our conquering and ſubduing of our covetous, and ambitious, and ſenſual luſts and deſires, are in a peculiar manner aſcribed to this faith which I have deſcribed. 1 John v. 4. 5. "This is the victory that "overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is "he that overcometh the world, but he that be-"lieveth that JESUS is the Son GOD?"

II. That this faith is truly and properly juſtifying and ſaving faith. I put theſe, juſtification and ſalvation, together, partly becauſe they are of the ſame conſideration, as to the influence which faith hath upon them; and the latter follows upon the former: for if we be "juſtified by faith," that is, have our ſins pardoned, by the ſame act of faith we are ſaved from hell, and conſequently made capable of eternal life; I ſay, by the very ſame act of faith that we obtain the pardon of our ſins, we are ſaved from hell, that is, the puniſhment due to ſin; for pardon removes the guilt, and guilt is nothing elſe but an obligation to puniſhment: and partly, becauſe I find the ſcripture uſeth them promiſcuouſly. When St. James diſputes about juſtification by faith, he uſes the term of being "ſaved by faith." Jam. ii. 14. "Can faith ſave him?" Sometimes of being "ju-"ſtified," ver. 24. "ſo that a man is not juſtified by "faith only."

In ſpeaking to this propoſition, that the faith of the goſpel, which I have deſcribed, is properly juſtifying and ſaving faith, I ſhall do theſe ſix things.

1. Shew that juſtification in ſcripture ſignifies no more

more than the pardon and remiſſion of ſins.

2. That faith can in no propriety of language be ſaid to be the inſtrument of our pardon.

3. That the influence that the faith of the goſpel, which I have deſcribed, hath upon the pardon of ſin, is this, that it is the whole and entire condition required on our parts, upon the performance of which GOD hath promiſed to pardon our ſins, and to ſave us.

4. That the ſcripture, where it treats of juſtification by faith, ſpeaks of this faith which I have deſcribed, and no other.

5. That no metaphorical deſcriptions of juſtifying faith are allowable, any farther than as they ſerve to illuſtrate and make clear the plain and ſimple notion of the thing. For if metaphors once come to be inſiſted on, and ſtrained, and conſequences come to be drawn from them, and doctrines founded, and theories built upon them, they are of very ill conſequence, and ſerve to no other purpoſe but to blind and obſcure the plain and ſimple notions of things, and to ſeduce and miſlead the underſtandings of men, and to multiply controverſies without end. And I the rather take notice of this abuſe of metaphors upon this ſubject, becauſe I do not know of any other head of divinity which hath ſuffered ſo much by them, as the doctrine of juſtifying faith; whereby the plain truth hath been very much obſcured, and occaſion miniſter'd to many endleſs diſputes.

6. That if this plain and ſimple notion of juſtifying faith were admitted, it would ſuperſede all thoſe controverſies about juſtification, which have ſo much troubled the church. Theſe particulars I ſhall, by GOD's aſſiſtance, ſpeak to, not out of a mind to oppoſe and contradict others; (what a pitiful deſign is that! and how much below one that is to ſpeak to

SERM. CCXXVI. men, in the name and fear of God!) but out of a hearty deſire to bring the truth to light, and to contribute ſomething to the clearing of that which is of ſo great importance and concernment to chriſtian religion.

1. That juſtification of a ſinner in ſcripture ſignifies no more than the pardon of ſin. That there are ſeveral acceptations of the word juſtification in the new teſtament, I deny not. Sometimes it ſignifies approbation in general of a thing, or perſon. So the word is uſed, Luke vii. 29. "And all the people "that heard him, and the publicans, juſtified God, "being baptized with the baptiſm of John. Juſtified "God," how is that? that is, they approved and followed his counſel, as appears evidently by the oppoſition in the next words; "but the Phariſees and "lawyers rejected the counſel of God againſt themſelves, being not baptized of him." Thoſe that "rejected the counſel of God" are oppoſed to thoſe that "juſtified God." And ſo at the 35th ver. "but wiſdom is juſtified of her children," that is, is approved. And ſo very probably it may be underſtood in the parable of the Phariſee and the publican, "I tell you, this man went down to his houſe juſtified rather than the other;" that is, of the two, God did rather approve of his humble carriage, than the Phariſee's proud and inſolent behaviour. Sometimes it ſignifies any proof or declaration of a thing. So Rom. iii. 4. "Let God be true, but every man "a liar; as it is written, That thou mighteſt be "juſtified in thy ſayings, and mighteſt overcome "when thou art judged," that is, that all thy words or promiſes might be proved and declared to be true, and that thou mayeſt prevail whenever thou art impleaded by men of unfaithfulneſs and unrighteouſneſs,

neſs. And ſo, 1 Tim. iii. 16. CHRIST is ſaid to be "juſtified in the Spirit;" that is, by the teſtimony of the Spirit concerning him; as alſo by the miracles which he wrought by the holy Ghoſt, and the miraculous gifts of the Spirit which were poured forth on the apoſtles, he was proved and declared to be the true Meſſias, and the Son of GOD. And this phraſe of CHRIST's being "juſtified by the Spirit," ſeems to be of the ſame ſenſe with that expreſſion, Rom. i. 4. "declared to be the Son of GOD with "power, according to the Spirit of holineſs, by the "reſurrection from the dead;" that is, he was evidently proved to be the Son of GOD, by the great miracle of his reſurrection, which was wrought by the power of the holy Ghoſt. But moſt frequently, to juſtify, in ſcripture, ſignifies to pardon. SERM. CCXXVI.

Thus the word "juſtify" do ſignify variouſly, according to the ſubject or matter it is applied to: but when it is applied to a ſinner, it ſignifies nothing elſe but pardon of his ſin. Nor can I poſſibly apprehend what other notion men can frame to themſelves, of a ſinner's being juſtified, diſtinct from pardon and remiſſion. Indeed if a perſon be not really guilty, that is, unjuſtly accuſed of a crime, he may be ſaid to be juſtified, when he is cleared from the charge and accuſation which is brought againſt him: but if a man be guilty, he cannot otherwiſe be ſaid to be juſtified, than by having the guilt removed, that is, by being pardoned. And that the ſcripture underſtands the ſame thing by juſtification, and pardon, or remiſſion of ſins, is I think very evident from theſe two texts. Acts xiii. 38, 39. "That through this "man is preached unto you the forgiveneſs of ſins;" that is, in and through JESUS CHRIST the way of pardon and forgiveneſs is declared, "and by him,

"all

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" all that believe are juſtified from all things, from " which ye could not be juſtified by the law of " Moſes;" that is, according to this declaration, all that do believe are by him, that is, by the virtue of his ſacrifice, acquitted and cleared from the guilt of all thoſe ſins, for which there is no way of expiation provided by the law of Moſes, that is, of preſumptuous ſins, for which there was no ſacrifice, but the man was to be cut off. Now if the meaning of this text be this, that in and through CHRIST the way of pardon and forgiveneſs is declared, and accordingly all that do believe in him are pardoned, then to be juſtified and pardoned, are all one in this place; but this is the meaning of the text, if by the phraſe of being " juſtified from all things, from " which we could not be juſtified by the law of Mo- " ſes," be meant the pardoning of ſuch ſins and tranſgreſſions, for which, by the law of Moſes, there was no way of expiation: but this muſt of neceſſity be the meaning of this phraſe; for what are " thoſe " things for which," it is ſaid, " we could not be " juſtified by the law of Moſes," but ſinful tranſgreſſions and violations of the law? and how can a man be ſaid to be juſtified from any ſin and tranſgreſſion, otherwiſe than by the pardon and forgiveneſs of it? The other text is, Rom. iv. 6, 7, 8. " Even as David alſo deſcribeth the bleſſedneſs of " the man unto whom GOD imputeth righteouſneſs " without works, ſaying, Bleſſed are they whoſe " iniquities are forgiven, and whoſe ſins are covered; " bleſſed is the man to whom the LORD will not " impute ſin. The man unto whom GOD imputeth " righteouſneſs" is the man whom GOD juſtifies. Now how does David deſcribe the bleſſedneſs of the man whom GOD juſtifies? thus, " bleſſed is the

" man

" man whoſe iniquities are forgiven, and whoſe ſins SERM.
" are covered," which is a metaphorical expreſſion CCXXVI.
of the ſame thing, covering of ſin being the pardoning of it. From hence I reaſon, if according to the apoſtle thoſe propoſitions be equivalent, " bleſſed is " the man whoſe iniquities are forgiven," and " bleſſed " is the man whom GOD juſtifies," then according to the apoſtle, juſtification and forgiveneſs of ſins are all one: but thoſe propoſitions are equivalent, if the apoſtle cite the text out of the Pſalms pertinently.

2. That faith can in no tolerable propriety of language be ſaid to be the inſtrument of our pardon, and conſequently not of our juſtification. An inſtrument is ſomething ſubordinate to the principal efficient cauſe, and made uſe of by it to produce the effect; and this in natural and artificial cauſes may be underſtood, but what notion to have of a moral inſtrument, I confeſs I am at a loſs. But to bring the buſineſs out of the clouds, we may thus conceive of the pardon of ſin. GOD in the goſpel hath entered into a covenant of grace and mercy with ſinners; one of the benefits promiſed by GOD in the covenant, is pardon of ſin. The conditions upon which we ſhall be made partakers of the benefit, are comprehended in this one word, faith, which ſignifies the whole of chriſtian religion, viz. ſuch an effectual aſſent to the revelation of the goſpel, as doth produce repentance, and ſincere obedience, and a truſt and confidence in CHRIST alone for ſalvation. The procuring or meritorious cauſe of this benefit, viz. the pardon of our ſins, is the death of CHRIST, which is called his blood or ſacrifice. The principal efficient cauſe of our pardon is GOD, in the ſentence of the law, or, which is all one, in the tenor of this

covenant,

covenant, declaring us pardoned upon theſe terms and conditions. Now how can faith, which is an act on our parts, and the condition to be performed by us, be ſaid to be an inſtrument in the hand of GOD of our pardon; unleſs men will think fit to call a condition an inſtrument, which I think no propriety of language will allow.

I ſhould now proceed to the third particular which I propoſed, but ſhall refer that to my next diſcourſe on this argument.

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Of juſtifying faith.

JOHN xx. 31.

But theſe are written, that ye might believe that JESUS *is the* CHRIST, *the Son of* GOD, *and that believing ye might have life through his name.*

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The third ſermon on this text.

THE obſervation I am diſcourſing upon is this, that "to believe that JESUS is the "CHRIST, the Son of GOD," is truly and properly ſanctifying, and juſtifying, and ſaving faith. I have entered upon the latter part of the obſervation, viz. to ſhew that this is truly and properly juſtifying and ſaving faith; in ſpeaking to which I propoſed to ſhew ſix things.

1. That juſtification in ſcripture ſignifies no more but the pardon and remiſſion of ſins.

2. That faith can in no propriety of language be ſaid to be the inſtrument of our pardon. Thus far I have gone, and now proceed to what remains, viz. to ſhew,

3. That

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3. That the influence which faith hath upon the pardon of ſin in this, that it is the whole and entire condition, required in the goſpel, of our pardon, upon the performance of which GOD hath promiſed to pardon ſin; which appears thus. All the conditions the goſpel requires on our part, in order to pardon, may be reduced to theſe four heads.

(1.) An aſſent to the truth of the goſpel.

(2.) A truſt and confidence in CHRIST as our only SAVIOUR.

(3.) Repentance from dead works.

(4.) Sincere obedience and holineſs of life.

But I have already proved at large, that all theſe are comprehended in the new teſtament notion of faith, which ſignifies the whole of chriſtian religion. And that repentance and obedience are conditions of our pardon, and conſequently of our juſtification, appears from theſe texts, Acts iii. 19. "Repent "therefore and be converted, that your ſins may be "blotted out." Doth not this imply that upon condition we do repent and be converted, GOD will pardon our ſins? 1 John i. 9. "If we confeſs our "ſins," (that is, with a reſolution to leave them; as it is ſaid elſewhere, "he that confeſſeth, and forſak-"eth his ſins;") "he is faithful and juſt to forgive "us our ſins, and to cleans us from all unrighte-"ouſneſs." Matt. vi. 14, 15. "For if ye forgive "men their treſpaſſes, your heavenly Father will al-"alſo forgive you: but if ye forgive not men "their treſpaſſes, neither will your Father forgive "your treſpaſſes." And to the ſame purpoſe, Matt. xviii. 35. "So likewiſe ſhall my heavenly Fa-"ther do unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive "not every one his brother their treſpaſſes." Luke vi. 37. "Judge not, and ye ſhall not be judged: "condemn,

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"condemn not, and ye ſhall not be condemned; "forgive, and ye ſhall be forgiven." Luke xi. 4. "And forgive us our ſins; for we alſo forgive eve- "ry one that is indebted to us." Where doth the ſcripture make any thing more plainly a condition of pardon, than it here does our forgiving of others? upon condition of the performance whereof he promiſes to forgive us; and without which he threatens not to forgive us. I know not what a condition is, if it be not that, which if we perform, we ſhall receive the benefit promiſed; if we do not, we ſhall fall ſhort of it.

4. That the ſcripture, where it ſpeaks of juſtification by faith, ſpeaks of this faith, and no other, of ſuch a faith as takes in the whole of chriſtian religion. The principal places where the ſcripture deſignedly treats of juſtification by faith, are the iii. and iv. chapters of the epiſtle to the Romans, the ii. and iii. to the Galatians, and the ii. of St. James. In the Romans and Galatians St. Paul doth plainly oppoſe faith to the law, and the righteouſneſs of it to the works of the law; and it will clearly appear to any one that will carefully read over theſe diſcourſes of St. Paul's, that by faith is meant the diſpenſation of the goſpel, and by the law, the Moſaical adminiſtration: and the reſult of all thoſe diſcourſes is, that men are not juſtified by performing the works which the legal diſpenſation required, but by aſſenting and ſubmitting to the revelation of the goſpel. And this is agreeable to what he ſays, Acts xiii. 38, 39. "Through "this man is preached unto you forgiveneſs of ſins; "and by him all that believe are juſtified from all "things, from which he could not be juſtified by the "law of Moſes."

It is true likewiſe, that the apoſtle, in the epiſtle to the Romans, doth not only diſpute againſt thoſe who

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ıo ſimply contended for juſtification by the legal penſation; but were fallen alſo into the groſs or and miſtake, that they did merit juſtification d pardon at GOD's hand; which is impoſſible: for rdon is free, and of grace, or elſe it is not pardon. nerefore the apoſtle aſſerts, that we are ſo juſtified faith, that neither our aſſent to the goſpel, nor r obedience to the commands of it, do merit this GOD's hands; for this would directly contradict tification by the faith of the goſpel. For how can y man poſſibly think, that he merits pardon by his lieving and obeying the goſpel, when this is part the goſpel which we believe, that CHRIST died r our ſins, and purchaſed our pardon at ſo dear a e; which had been very unjuſt, if we our ſelves uld have done any think to have merited it.

And that faith is taken for the revelation of the ɔſpel, in oppoſition to the legal adminiſtrations, ll appear by conſidering theſe texts. Gal. iii. 23. But before faith came, we were kept under the law;" by which the apoſtle plainly means this, at before the revelation of the goſpel to the world, : were under the legal adminiſtration: for he adds terwards, "we were ſhut up unto the faith that ſhould afterward be revealed;" and what is "the faith that ſhould afterward be revealed", but the ɔſpel? which in the fulneſs of time was to be reveal- l to the world, till which time we were held under e diſpenſation of the law: and ver. 24. "where- fore the law was our ſchool-maſter to bring us unto CHRIST, that we might be juſtified by faith;" at is, the law was a diſcipline preparatory for the ɔſpel, that when that came, we might be juſtified r it: and ver. 25. "but after that faith is come, we are no longer under a ſchool-maſter;" that is,

after

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after the goſpel was revealed, we were ſet free from the ſevere and harſh diſpenſation of the law; and our aſſent and ſubmiſſion to that revelation, is that whereby we are ſaid to be juſtified. Rom. iii. 23. "Even the righteouſneſs of GOD, which is by the "faith of JESUS CHRIST," that is, by the goſpel, "unto all, and upon all them that believe." And ver. 26. "that ye might be juſt, and the juſtifier of "him which believeth in JESUS;" τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ, the juſtifier of him that yields aſſent and ſubmiſſion to the goſpel of CHRIST. And this faith is ſaid to be "imputed to us for righteouſneſs," chap. iv. 24. "But for us alſo, to whom it ſhall be im-"puted, if we believe on him that raiſed up JESUS "our LORD from the dead;" that is, if we aſſent and ſubmit to the revelation of the goſpel, which GOD hath confirmed by that eminent miracle of raiſing up CHRIST from the dead.

St. James tells us moſt expreſly, that the faith which juſtifies doth contain obedience in it: and if it do not, it is dead, and falſe, and ineffectual to all purpoſes of pardon and ſalvation: and that if any man pretend to faith, and that faith be deſtitute of the proper and genuine effects of true faith, it will be unprofitable to him, and not at all avail to his juſtification and ſalvation. The ſum of his diſcourſe is, that the faith which juſtifies and ſaves us, muſt not only be a bare aſſent of the underſtanding to the truths of the goſpel; but muſt include in it obedience to all the commands of the goſpel: and if it does not, it does no more deſerve the name of faith, than good words to a man in want deſerve the name of charity. Chap. ii. ver. 14, 15, 16, 17. "What "doth it profit, my brethren, though a man ſay "he hath faith, and hath not works? can faith "ſave

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" ſave him? If a brother or ſiſter be naked, and " deſtitute of daily food, and one of you ſay unto " them, Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled; " notwithſtanding ye give them not thoſe things " which are needful to the body; what doth it pro- " fit? Even ſo faith, if it hath not works, is dead, " being alone." And to this purpoſe he inſtanceth in Abraham and Rahab, and ſhews that the faith which juſtified them, did include in it the effects of faith, viz. obedience, and good works, ver. 21, 22. " Was not Abraham our father juſtified by works, " when he had offered Iſaac his ſon upon the altar? " Seeſt thou how faith wrought with his works, and " by works was faith made perfect?" And ver. 23. " And the ſcripture was fulfilled, which ſaith, Abra- " ham believed GOD, and it was imputed unto him " for righteouſneſs." But if Abraham were " juſti- " fied by works," viz. by offering up his ſon upon the altar, in obedience to GOD's command, as he ſays before, at the 21ſt verſe, how was " the ſcrip- " ture fulfilled, which ſaith, that faith was imputed " to him for righteouſneſs," that is, he was juſtified by faith; unleſs faith take in the works of obedience? From whence he concludes, " that by works a man " is juſtified, and not by faith only;" not by a naked aſſent to the truth, but by ſuch a faith as includes obedience; which he farther illuſtrates by a ſimilitude at the laſt verſe; " as the body without the ſpirit is " dead, ſo faith without works is dead alſo." A living faith doth as truly contain obedience in it, as a living body contains a ſpirit.

And thoſe diſtinctions which are commonly applied to this diſcourſe of St. James do not clear it, but contradict the expreſs deſign of it. Some ſay that *fides quæ eſt viva juſtificat; ſed non quâ viva:*

SERM. CCXXVII. "Faith which is living juſtifies; but not as a living "faith." Others ſay, (which is much to the ſame purpoſe) *fides juſtificat ſine operibus; ſed fides ſine operibus non juſtificat:* "Faith juſtifies without works; "but faith without works does not juſtify." But St. James ſays expreſly, that "we are juſtified by works." How then is that true, that "faith juſti- "fies without works?" And he ſays that works are the life of our faith. How then can any man ſay, that "though faith juſtifies, yet not as it is a living "faith;" when we are juſtified by that which is the very life of our faith, and that is obedience?

There are two other diſtinctions whereby men endeavour to elude this plain text, which I did not mention before; that "faith juſtifies the perſon; "and works juſtify the faith," and that this is St. James his meaning. But what ground for this, when the text ſpeaks expreſly of the perſon being juſtified by works, as well as faith? "Was not Abraham "our father juſtified by works?" ver. 21. "You "ſee then that by works a man is juſtified; and not "by faith only." ver. 24. "Likewiſe alſo was not "Rahab the harlot juſtified by works?" What colour is here for any man to ſay, that St. James does not ſpeak of the juſtification of the perſon by works; but of the faith? Or what neceſſity of framing this diſtinction, but only to ſerve an opinion? But at this rate a man may maintain any thing, though it be never ſo contrary to ſcripture, and elude the cleareſt text in the bible.

The other diſtinction, which is much to the ſame ſenſe, is, that the apoſtle doth not here ſpeak of a real juſtification before GOD; but a declarative juſtification before men. But according to this, what ſenſe can be made of ver. 14. "What doth it profit, my "brethren,

" brethren, if a man ſay, I have faith, and have SERM. CCXXVII.
" not works? can faith ſave him?" That is, according to this explication, can faith without works ſave him before men?

And this doth not contradict St. Paul, who ſaith, Gal. ii. 16. that " a man is not juſtified by the works " of the law; but by the faith of JESUS CHRIST." For how does this, that we are juſtified not by the legal diſpenſation, but by the faith of the goſpel, which includes obedience and good works, contradict what St. James ſays, that we are not juſtified by a bare aſſent to the truth of the goſpel, but by obedience to the commands of it? And I do not ſee that upon the contrary ſuppoſition, viz. that the faith of the goſpel doth not include obedience in it, it is poſſible to reconcile theſe two apoſtles. Suppoſe this was St. Paul's meaning, that " we are juſtified by " faith," as the only condition and inſtrument, call it what they will, of our juſtification; but not by obedience or good works, as a condition of our juſtification; by what kind of comment can St. James his words be brought to this ſenſe? what man would allow that thoſe words at the 21ſt verſe, " was not Abraham our father juſtified by " works, when he offered Iſaac his ſon upon the al- " tar", ſhould be explained by this ſenſe? Was not Abraham, when in obedience to God's command he had offered his ſon upon the altar, and upon this act of obedience was juſtified, was not he juſtified by faith only, and not by any work or act of obedience? Or that thoſe words at the 24th verſe, " ye ſee then " that by works a man is juſtified, and not by faith " only," ſhould be interpreted, ye ſee then that by faith only a man is juſtified, and not by works? And unleſs they be thus interpreted, they are not to be

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reconciled with the ſenſe of St. Paul's words, which many faſten upon them: but if St. Paul's words be taken in the moſt plain and obvious ſenſe they are capable of, viz. that "we are not juſtified by the "works of the law," that is, by performing the works required by the legal diſpenſation; "but by the "faith of JESUS CHRIST," that is, by aſſenting and ſubmitting to the revelation of the goſpel; we do not ſtrain St. James his words, to reconcile him with St. Paul.

And thus I have ſhewn, that where the ſcripture ſpeaks of juſtification by faith, it ſpeaks of this faith which I have deſcribed. I add, and of no other; not of a bare appropriation of the grace and mercy of the goſpel; that is, in plain engliſh, this is not juſtifying faith, to believe that I am pardoned, and juſtified, nor to have a firm aſſurance of this. For if we be juſtified by faith, we muſt believe before we can be juſtified; but if this be juſtifying faith to believe, or be aſſured we are juſtified, we muſt be juſtified before we believe; or elſe when we believe that we are juſtified, we muſt believe that which is not true. Nor is this juſtifying faith, to lay hold of the righteouſneſs and merits of CHRIST for the pardon of our ſins; that is, to truſt and confide only in that, as the meritorious cauſe of our pardon. For though this be part of the notion of juſtifying faith, it is not all; though this be one of the terms or conditions upon which we are juſtified; yet it is not the whole and entire condition; which beſides this takes in an aſſent to the whole goſpel, repentance from dead works, and obedience to all the precepts of the goſpel. And if any man can produce any one text which ſaith, that the faith which juſtifies, conſiſts only in a truſt and confidence in the merits of CHRIST, for the pardon of ſin, or any thing to this effect, I will be moſt ready pub-

publicly to acknowledge my error: but if nobody can do this, I ſhall beg their pardon if I do continue ſtill of the ſame mind as I was. SERM. CCXXVII.

I have now done with the fourth thing I propounded: but before I ſpeak to the two heads which remain, I muſt remove an objection or two, that my former diſcourſe may ſeem liable to.

Objection firſt, to make obedience a condition of pardon, ſeems to take away the freeneſs of GOD's grace in pardoning ſinners.

1. GOD's grace in pardoning a ſinner is ſaid to be free, not becauſe it is not ſuſpended upon any condition; for the ſcripture tells us plainly, that it is upon the condition of faith, and repentance, and forgiving others, and the like: but it is free, becauſe GOD was pleaſed freely to give his Son to die for our ſins, and to accept of his ſacrifice for the expiation of them, and to impoſe eaſy and reaſonable conditions upon us, in order to our enjoying of this benefit; and upon ſuch conditions, though they have nothing of virtue or merit, of any natural or moral efficacy, to deſerve, or procure ſuch a benefit as the pardon of our ſins, for the ſake of his Son, whom he gave to be a ranſom for us, to receive us to grace and mercy; and I think this abundantly enough to make our juſtification very gracious and free, though not abſolutely free from all condition.

2. Our ſalvation is ſaid in ſcripture to be as free as our juſtification; we are ſaid "to be ſaved by "grace," as well as "juſtified freely by his grace." But will any man ſay, that we are ſaved without any conditions, who reads theſe texts? "He that be-"lieveth on the Son, hath everlaſting life: but he "that believeth not the Son, ſhall not ſee life. Bleſ-"ſed are the pure in heart; for they ſhall ſee GOD,

SERM. CCXXVII. "Except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh. If ye "walk after the fleſh ye ſhall die: but if through the "Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the fleſh, ye ſhall "live. Without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the LORD." So that he who can underſtand how we may be ſaved by grace, though our ſalvation be ſuſpended upon the condition of faith, repentance, and holineſs, and obedience of life, may, if he pleaſe, underſtand how we may be juſtified freely by GOD's grace, though it be upon the ſame conditions. So that if men were not monſtrouſly perverſe, it is impoſſible they ſhould not ſee the weakneſs of this objection.

Objection the ſecond. This is the doctrine of the Papiſts, that obedience and good works are a condition of our juſtification.

Anſw. 1. I am for the doctrine which is evidently contained in ſcripture, whoever hold it. A man ought not to be frighted out of the truth by any name.

2. But there is a wide difference between the doctrine of the Papiſts about juſtification, and this doctrine. They ſay that obedience and good works are not only a condition of our juſtification, but a meritorious cauſe of it; which I abhor as much as any one. It is the doctrine of merit that the Proteſtants chiefly oppoſe in the matter of juſtification; and if ſome alſo oppoſe the Papiſts about good works being a condition, I know nobody that thinks himſelf obliged to hold every opinion that any Proteſtant hath maintained againſt the Papiſts: and the like I ſay to the objection of Socinianiſm and Arminianiſm, and a hundred names more, if people think fit to faſten them upon it.

And now I might compare this doctrine with the contrary. All that may be ſaid againſt it is, that it dimi-

diminiſheth the grace of God: but that I have ſhewn it doth not; but then it hath theſe advantages: It is, ſo far as I can judge, (and mine own judgment muſt govern me) much more plainly contained in ſcripture, and it is a doctrine more "according to godlineſs," it tends more to quicken men to obedience and a holy life, to believe that they cannot have their ſins otherwiſe pardoned, than to believe that they may have their ſins pardoned without obedience and a holy life; and if obedience be not a neceſſary condition of pardon, it is plain that men may be pardoned without it. For example, if a man promiſe me a thouſand pounds, only upon this condition, that I will believe him and truſt him, but without any condition of doing what he ſhall command me, and he ſhall declare thus much to me; if I can truſt this man's word, I need not doubt but I ſhall have the ſum promiſed; though I ſhould diſobey him in every thing that he commanded me to do: and this is juſt the caſe; and if it be, it is no wonder that men are ſo loth to diſbelieve this pleaſant opinion, which gives men comfortable hopes of the pardon of their ſins, upon ſuch eaſy terms. Not that I am ſo uncharitable, as not to acknowledge that our worthy and excellent divines, who have been of this judgment, have always preſſed the neceſſity of holineſs and obedience: but I am ſorry they could not do it with ſo good advantage, according to their principles, the natural conſequences of them tending to licentiouſneſs, and a neglect of the precepts of the goſpel; to which purpoſe they have been ſadly abuſed by ſeveral libertines in theſe and former times, ever ſince Luther's days, and I could never yet ſee how Antinomianiſm could ſolidly be confuted upon thoſe principles. SERM. CCXXVII.

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3. That no metaphorical deſcriptions of juſtifying faith are allowable any farther than as they ſerve to illuſtrate the plain, and proper, and ſimple notion of faith. My meaning is, he that would teach men what faith is, he muſt firſt acquaint men with the thing, and deſcribe it in as proper and ſimple words as can be, and not by figurative and metaphorical phraſes. Indeed after a man hath delivered the ſimple notion of a thing in proper words, he may afterwards illuſtrate it by metaphors: but then theſe are not to be inſiſted upon, and ſtrained to the utmoſt extent of the metaphor, beyond what the true notion of the thing will bear: for if conſequences once come to be drawn from metaphors, and doctrines founded, and theories built upon them, inſtead of illuſtrating the thing, they blind and obſcure it, and ſerve to no other purpoſe, but to ſeduce and miſlead the underſtandings of men, and to multiply controverſies without end: and (as I told you before) I do the rather take notice of this abuſe of metaphors upon this ſubject, becauſe I do not know any other head of divinity which hath ſuffered ſo much by them, as the doctrine of juſtifying faith, whereby the plain truth hath been very much darkened, and occaſion miniſter'd to many endleſs diſputes. But this will beſt appear by ſome particular inſtances. Juſtifying faith hath uſually been deſcribed by theſe metaphors, "reſting, "and relying, and leaning upon CHRIST, appre- "hending, and laying hold, and applying of CHRIST, "receiving of CHRIST, and coming to him." Now concerning theſe, I ſhall briefly ſpeak theſe three or four things.

(1.) That none of theſe metaphors, except the two laſt, "receiving of CHRIST, and coming to him," are any where uſed in ſcripture, to deſcribe juſtifying faith

faith by; and therefore there is no reaſon why they ſhould be ſo much uſed and inſiſted on. Let any man ſhew me where juſtifying faith is any where in ſcripture deſcribed by "reſting, and relying, and leaning "upon CHRIST, by apprehending and laying hold, "and applying of him." SERM. CCXXVII.

(2.) If theſe metaphors were explained and turned into proper and plain words, they can ſignify nothing elſe, but that faith which I have been all this while deſcribing. For what can any man underſtand by "reſting, and relying, and leaning upon CHRIST," but to truſt in him as the author of our eternal ſalvation, under which word all the benefits which CHRIST hath purchaſed for us are comprehended? Now can any man be ſaid to truſt in CHRIST, as the author of his ſalvation, otherwiſe than by aſſenting to the truth of the goſpel, and complying with the terms and conditions of it? and what can any man underſtand by "apprehending, and laying hold on, "and applying CHRIST," other than this, to make uſe of him for all thoſe ends and purpoſes for which GOD hath appointed him? and what thoſe are, the ſcripture tells us, that "he is made unto us of GOD, "wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and "redemption."

(3.) As for thoſe ſcripture metaphors of "receiving CHRIST, and coming to him," the ſcripture uſeth them but ſparingly, and I dare ſay, for once that it uſeth theſe metaphors, it doth twenty times deſcribe faith by plain and proper words; and where it does make uſe of theſe metaphors, it doth ſufficiently explain them. So you find coming to CHRIST is explained by learning of him, Matt. xi. 28, 29. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy "laden, and I will give you reſt. Take my yoke "upon

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" upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and " lowly in heart; and ye ſhall find reſt unto your " ſouls. That is, come to me as ſcholars and diſciples to be taught by me; in order to which it is requiſite that we ſhould believe him. *Oportet diſcentem credere*, " he that will learn, muſt believe him " that teacheth him," and truſt his ſkill. And ſo for receiving him, leſt the metaphor ſhould ſeduce men, St. John had no ſooner uſed it, but he tells what he means by it, John i. 12. " But as many as " received him, to them gave he power to become " the ſons of GOD, even to them that believe on his " name;" that is, believed him to be the perſon promiſed to be the Meſſias, and SAVIOUR of the world; as appears by the oppoſition in the verſe before, " he came to his own, and his own received " him not;" that is, rejected him, did not own him to be the true Meſſias. But now if we will ſtrain ſuch a metaphor as this beyond the intention of it, and becauſe believing is called a receiving of CHRIST, and we receive things with the hand, and the hand is an inſtrument, will from hence infer, that faith is an inſtrument of our juſtification; what may not men make of the ſcripture at this rate.

(4.) I will add this concerning ſcripture metaphors in general, that where the ſcripture uſeth metaphors, which were very familiar in thoſe languages in which the ſcripture was writ, and well underſtood by thoſe who ſpoke that language, but are very obſcure and uncouth to us, and not at all uſed in our language, as moſt of the ſcripture metaphors are, the proper work of a miniſter is not to inſiſt in ſuch caſes upon ſcripture metaphors, to darken his diſcourſe by them, but to explain them, and make them intelligible, to tranſlate them into engliſh, and inſtead

inſtead of them to uſe ſuch phraſes as people are more familiarly acquainted with, and are uſed in our own language. For a man may be "a barbarian" that ſpeaks to people in unknown phraſes and metaphors, as well as "he that ſpeaks in an unknown "tongue;" and the very ſame reaſon that obligeth us to put the ſcripture into a known language, doth oblige men to explain the doctrines contained in it by ſuch phraſes and metaphors as are known and uſed in that language. SERM. CCXXVII.

(5.) That if this plain and ſimple notion of juſtifying faith were admitted, it would ſupercede all thoſe controverſies about juſtification, which have ſo much troubled the reformed churches. Thoſe who have been curious to enquire into theſe matters, have reckoned up at leaſt twenty ſeveral opinions among the Proteſtants concerning juſtifying faith. I do not deſire to acquaint myſelf with thoſe differences; he that would know what juſtification, and juſtifying faith are, ſhall ſooner come to underſtand the nature of them, by diligent reading of the ſcriptures, than by reading over all the controverſial writings of divines about them; and if men would but content themſelves with thoſe plain and ſimple deſcriptions which the ſcripture gives us of faith, there could not be any great difference about it; this would cut off moſt of thoſe diſputes which have been commenced upon metaphors and figurative ſpeeches. And here I had thought to have deſcended to a particular conſideration of the controverſies about juſtifying faith; but I am weary of the work, and therefore ſhall only make ſome brief reflections upon this whole diſcourſe, and then apply it to our own uſe. But this, God willing, the next opportunity.

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SERMON CCXXVIII.

The condition of the goſpel-covenant, and the merit of CHRIST, conſiſtent.

JOHN xx. 31.

But theſe are written, that ye might believe that JESUS *is the* CHRIST, *the Son of* GOD, *and that believing ye might have life through his name.*

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I HAVE in my former diſcourſes on theſe words treated largely of the nature of chriſtian faith, particularly as it ſanctifies, juſtifies, and ſaves men. All that I farther propoſe is, to make ſome reflections upon this whole diſcourſe, particularly that which relates to juſtifying faith, and then apply all to our own uſe.

I have already taken notice of two objections, to which my diſcourſe may ſeem liable; and if yet there remain any prejudice upon any man's ſpirit againſt this doctrine, I would deſire ſuch calmly to conſider it, and the agreeableneſs of it not to the opinions of men, but to the word of GOD, and the ſuitableneſs of it to the great deſign of chriſtian religion, every where expreſſed in the goſpel, which is to bring men to holineſs and obedience. And what argument and conſideration can be more powerful to take men off from ſin, and to excite them to the practice of holineſs than this, that repentance and obedience are an indiſpenſable condition of our juſtification and pardon? And this is the very point in difference, whether the goſpel do not make repentance and obedience conditions of our pardon and juſtification, as well as an aſſent to the truth of the goſpel, and a truſt in CHRIST as the meritorious

cauſe of our ſalvation. That they are, I have endeavoured to prove from ſcripture; and for the farther clearing of it, I deſire that the nature of the goſpel-covenant may be well conſidered, which I take to be this. On GOD's part there are certain benefits promiſed, juſtification, and pardon of ſin, and eternal life and ſalvation. On our part there are certain conditions required before we can be made partakers of thoſe benefits: theſe are, to aſſent to the truth of the goſpel, truſting in CHRIST as our only SAVIOUR, repentance from dead works, and a ſincere purpoſe and reſolution of obededience, and a holy life; theſe make up the whole and entire condition of the goſpel, and are often expreſſed by this one word, faith, which ſignifies the whole duty of a chriſtian; becauſe he that truly believes the goſpel, will do whatever the goſpel requires. And hence it is, that to be a chriſtian, and to be a believer, are in the phraſe of the new teſtament all one. Now the matter in controverſy is plainly this; whether this whole condition be required of us in order to our pardon and juſtification, as well as in order to our ſalvation. That repentance, and obedience, and holineſs of life are conditions of our ſalvation, I think is univerſally agreed; I am ſure it is clearly expreſſed in theſe two texts, "CHRIST is the author of eternal ſalvation to "them that obey him," Heb. v. 9. "Without ho-"lineſs no man ſhall ſee the LORD," Heb. xii. 14. And that the conditions of our juſtification and ſalvation are the ſame, I think is every whit as clear both from ſcripture, and from the general acknowledgment of divines by neceſſary conſequence. From ſcripture, St. James ſays, that the ſame thing that juſtifies us, ſaves us: for when he diſputes, whether we are juſtified by faith only, or by faith and works, he

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he hath this expreſſion, "What doth it profit, my "brethren, though a man ſay he hath faith, and "have not works? can works ſave him?" From whence the inference is plain, that upon the very ſame condition that we are juſtified, we are ſaved. And it is evident by neceſſary conſequence from the general acknowledgment of divines; for I think this is univerſally agreed by divines, that whatever puts a man into a ſtate of juſtification and pardon, puts a man into a ſtate of ſalvation; and if this be true, it neceſſarily follows, that the conditions of our juſtification and ſalvation are the ſame: and if aſſent to the truth of the goſpel, and truſt in CHRIST as our only SAVIOUR, be the only conditions of our juſtification, then they are the only conditions of our ſalvation; and repentance and obedience are not conditions of our ſalvation: but if they be conditions of our ſalvation, then they are of our juſtification. And I will be bold to ſay, that this hath as much of demonſtration in it as any thing in divinity is capable of; and I wonder extremely how any man, that conſiders the nature of the goſpel-covenant, can imagine that we ſhould be made partakers of any bleſſing or benefit promiſed in the covenant, without performing the whole condition of the covenant.

And now if any man aſk, *cui bono?* to what end is all this? Suppoſe it be true, to what purpoſe is it to awaken differences, and ſtir up controverſies about theſe matters? In order to theſe two ends, which I take to be very conſiderable.

1. That we may be able to anſwer the Papiſts, who charge us with Solifidianiſm; as if we were of this opinion, that if a man do but truſt in CHRIST, that is, be but confidently perſuaded that he will ſave him and pardon him, this is ſufficient; and conſequently

quently he that is thus perſuaded need not take any farther care of his ſalvation, but may live as he liſt. And I do not ſee how this can be avoided; eſpecially if this be true, which our divines univerſally aſſert, that whatever puts a man into a juſtified ſtate, puts him into a ſtate of ſalvation: I ſay, I do not ſee how this charge can be avoided, unleſs we own holineſs and obedience to be conditions of our juſtification, as well as truſt in CHRIST. I know no other middle way between Popery and Antinomianiſm. But,

2. Which is more conſiderable, without this we can give no ſatisfactory and reaſonable account of our religion to a heathen. Suppoſe a heathen ſhould ſay thus, your religion gives a very good account of the corruption and ſinfulneſs of mankind, and hath provided a very probable remedy for the expiation of it, by the death of the Son of GOD: but this ſeems to me very unreaſonable, and to contradict the moſt natural notions that we have of GOD's juſtice and holineſs, that he ſhould pardon men, as you ſay he does, though they do not repent of their ſins, nor are reſolved to leave them, nay, though they be reſolved to go on in a wicked courſe. Did ever any wiſe prince pardon a traitor upon theſe terms? But whoever ſays that repentance, and a ſincere purpoſe and reſolution of obedience are not the condition of our pardon, ſays that GOD will pardon men without repentance, though they are not at all ſorry for what they have done, nor reſolved to change their courſe: for that is a condition without which a thing cannot be; and if repentance be not a condition of pardon, a man may be pardoned without it. And if this be true, chriſtianity is the moſt lewd and ſenſeleſs doctrine in the world. For what can be a greater encouragement to ſin than this, to tell men that they may

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may be pardoned without repentance; that is, though they live in ſin, and continue ſo to do. Paganiſm never taught any ſuch thing. Nay, they may add farther, that this which you teach as the doctrine of your religion, ſeems expreſly contrary to your own books, which you ſay contain your religion. Does not the bible ſay, that "he that confeſ-"ſeth and forſaketh his ſin, ſhall find mercy?" And doth not this plainly imply, that repentance is a condition of pardon? "Let the wicked forſake "his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, "and let him return unto the LORD, and he will "have mercy upon him; and to our GOD, for he "will abundantly pardon." Doth it not ſay, that "if you forgive not men their treſpaſſes, neither "will your heavenly Father forgive you?" Can any words more plainly expreſs a condition than theſe do? How ſhould we be able to defend our religion againſt ſuch an aſſault, unleſs we diſclaim this charge, and tell them plainly, and without a diſtinction, that our religion teacheth that repentance and reſolution of holineſs and obedience are conditions of our pardon and juſtification? I would to GOD men would conſult the honour of chriſtianity, and when they hold any opinion, they would not conſider the intereſt of a party, but the univerſal concernment of the chriſtian religion. If we had to deal with ſubtile heathens, as the primitive fathers of the church had, we ſhould ſee a neceſſity of laying aſide ſuch unreaſonable opinions. I would fain have any man ſhew any one clear paſſage out of any of the ancient fathers and writers concerning chriſtian religion, which ſays, that truſt in CHRIST for ſalvation is the only condition of our juſtification, and that repentance and obedience are not; or that explains juſtification by

faith

faith alone, in this ſenſe. I know it is uſually ſaid, the ancient fathers and Chriſtians were ignorant of the doctrine of juſtification, in a great meaſure, and knew very little of the myſtery of the goſpel. I know not what they mean by myſtery: but I am ſure they defined chriſtian religion better, and gave a more reaſonable and ſatisfactory account of it, than any of thoſe do, who are ſo apt to ſlight them. SERM. CCXXVIII.

The uſe of this doctrine is as follows.

Firſt, to perſuade men to place all their hope and confidence of ſalvation in JESUS CHRIST the Son of GOD; that is, to believe that through the alone merit of his death and ſufferings, GOD is reconciled to us, and that only upon the account of the ſatisfaction which he hath made to divine juſtice, we are reſtored to the favour of GOD, and our ſins are pardoned to us, and we have a title to eternal life. Not but that there are conditions required on our part, to make us capable of theſe benefits, faith, and repentance, and ſincere obedience and holineſs of life, without which we ſhall never be made partakers of them: but that the ſatisfaction of CHRIST is the only meritorious cauſe of theſe bleſſings. And to perſuade men to the belief of this, I ſhall endeavour to ſatisfy them of theſe two things.

I. That CHRIST hath properly merited theſe bleſſings for us.

II. That he only hath done it. The firſt of theſe propoſitions is directly levelled againſt the Socinians: the ſecond againſt the Papiſts. I ſhall ſpeak but briefly of them.

I. That CHRIST hath properly merited theſe bleſſings for us. And this being purely matter of revelation, we are to rely upon ſcripture only for the proof of it. Matt. xx. 28. "The Son of man came

SERM. CCXXVIII. " not to be miniſter'd unto, but to miniſter, and
" give his life a ranſom for many, λύτρον ἀντὶ π
" λῶν, a price of redemption," inſtead of that wh
ſhould have been paid by us. John vi. 51. " A
" the bread which I ſhall give is my fleſh, whic
" will give for the life of the world." John x.
CHRIST is called " the good ſhepherd, that lays de
" his life for his ſheep." John xv. 12, 13. " Th
" is my commandment, that ye love one anot
" as I have loved you. Greater love hath no n
" than this, that a man lay down his life for
" friends." Matt. xxvi. 28. " For this is my bl
" of the new teſtament, which is ſhed for ma
" for the remiſſion of ſins." Rom. v. 6. " I
" when we were yet without ſtrength, in due ti
" CHRIST died for the ungodly." 1 Cor. xv.
" For I delivered unto you firſt of all, t
" which I alſo received, how that CHRIST died
" our ſins according to the ſcriptures." 2 Cor
14, 15. " For the love of CHRIST conſtraineth
" becauſe we thus judge; that if one died
" all, then were all dead: and that he died for
" that they which live, ſhould not henceforth
" unto themſelves, but unto him which died
" them, and roſe again." Eph. i. 7. " In wh
" we have redemption through his blood, the
" giveneſs of ſins, according to the riches of
" grace." Col. i. 20, 21, 22. " And (having m
" peace through the blood of his croſs) by hin
" reconcile all things unto himſelf, by him, I
" whether they be things in earth, or things in h
" ven. And you that were ſometime alienat
" and enemies in your mind by wicked works,
" now hath he reconciled, in the body of his fl
" through death, to preſent you holy, and unbla
" al

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" able, and unreprovable in his ſight." 1 Theſſ. v. 9, 10. " For GOD hath not appointed us to " wrath: but to obtain ſalvation by our LORD " JESUS CHRIST, who died for us." Heb. ii. 9. " That he by the grace of GOD ſhould taſte death " for every man." Heb. ix. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. " But CHRIST being come an high-prieſt of good " things to come, by a greater and more perfect " tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to ſay, " not of this building; neither by the blood of " goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered " in once into the holy place, having obtained eter- " nal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls " and of goats, and the aſhes of an heifer, ſprink- " ling the unclean, ſanctifyeth to the purifying of " the fleſh; how much more ſhall the blood of " CHRIST, who through the eternal Spirit offered " himſelf without ſpot unto GOD, purge your con- " ſcience from dead works, to ſerve the living GOD? " And for this cauſe he is the mediator of the new " teſtament, that by means of death, for the re- " demption of the tranſgreſſions that were under the " firſt teſtament, they which are called might re- " ceive the promiſe of eternal inheritance." And ver. 25, 26, 27, 28. " Nor yet that he ſhould offer " himſelf often, as the high-prieſt entered into the " holy place every year with blood of others: (for " then muſt he often have ſuffered ſince the founda- " tion of the world:) but now once in the end of " the world, hath he appeared to put away ſin by " the ſacrifice of himſelf. And as it is appointed " unto men once to die, but after this the judg- " ment: ſo CHRIST was once offered to bear the " ſins of many; and unto them that look for him, " ſhall he appear the ſecond time without ſin unto

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"ſalvation." Heb. x. 11, 12. "And every prieſt "ſtandeth daily miniſtring and offering oftentimes "the ſame ſacrifices, which can never take away "ſins: but this man, after he had offered one ſa- "crifice for ſins, for ever ſat down on the right- "hand of GOD." 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. "Foraſmuch as "ye know that ye were not redeemed with corrupti- "ble things, as ſilver and gold, from your vain con- "verſation received by tradition from your fathers: "but with the precious blood of CHRIST, as of a "lamb without blemiſh and without ſpot." 1 Pet. ii. 21, 24. "Becauſe CHRIST alſo ſuffered for us; "who his own ſelf bare our ſins, in his own body, "on the tree." 1 Pet. iii. 18. "For CHRIST alſo "hath once ſuffered for our ſins, the juſt for the un- "juſt, that he might bring us to GOD." 1 John ii. 1, 2. "My little children, theſe things write I "unto you, that ye ſin not. And if any man ſin, "we have an advocate with the Father, JESUS "CHRIST the righteous: and he is the propitiation "for our ſins: and not for ours only, but alſo "for the ſins of the whole world." 1 John iii. 16. "Hereby perceive we the love of GOD, "becauſe he laid down his life for us: and we "ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." 1 John iv. 10. "Herein is love, not that we loved "GOD; but that he loved us, and ſent his Son to "be the propitiation for our ſins." Rev. i. 5. "Unto him that loved us, and waſhed us from our "ſins in his own blood." Rev. v. 9. "Thou "waſt ſlain, and haſt redeemed us to GOD by thy "blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and "people, and nation." From theſe and many other texs, it ſeems to be very plain and evident, that CHRIST died for our ſins, and ſuffered in our ſtead,

ſtead, and by the ſacrifice of himſelf hath made an atonement for us, and reconciled us to GOD, and hath paid a price and a ranſom for us; and by the merit of his death hath purchaſed for us forgiveneſs of ſins, and "inheritance among them that are ſanc-"tified." And I do not know any doctrine of our religion, that is founded and eſtabliſhed upon more and plainer texts, which cannot be underſtood in any other ſenſe, without offering great violence to the firſt and moſt obvious meaning of them.

I know the Socinians have framed evaſions to all theſe texts, which I have not time now to produce and examine: nor would it be worth the while. I ſhall only ſay this to them in general; that there is no principle of religion ſo plainly laid down in the whole ſcripture, but may be overthrown by the ſame, or the like evaſions. Suppoſe CHRIST had died in our ſtead, and made ſatisfaction for ſin, and GOD had intended to declare ſo much to us; in what plainer, and more expreſs, and proper words could he have done it, than the ſcripture hath already done? If GOD had ſaid in the ſcripture expreſly, that CHRIST had "died in our room and ſtead, and "had ſatisfied for our ſins;" theſe very expreſſions, by the ſame arts of interpretation, might have been ſtrained and wreſted to ſome other ſenſe. So that if GOD did not intend to expreſs to us by theſe texts, that CHRIST ſatisfied for the ſins of men," yet they are ſo obvious to be interpreted to that ſenſe, and ſo hardly, if at all, capable of any other, that we cannot imagine, without a great reflection upon the wiſdom of GOD, that he ſhould deliver his mind to men in words and expreſſions ſo exceedingly liable to a quite different ſenſe from what he intended. Beſides that there is nothing more unreaſonable, than

SERM. CCXXVIII. to deny that to be the meaning of ſcripture, which if it had been the meaning, could not have been expreſſed in plainer and more advantageous words; eſpecially when this is done, not in one or two texts, but very many; and not by one form of expreſſion, but ſeveral, and all inclining to the ſame ſenſe; and, which is worſt of all, this violence is offered to ſcripture in a matter which does neither contradict other texts of ſcripture, nor the reaſon of mankind, viz. that one man ſhould ſuffer in another's ſtead, and make ſatisfaction for the crimes and faults which another hath committed; ſuppoſing the party offended be willing to accept of the commutation, and the party that ſuffers in another's ſtead do voluntarily do it.

II. That CHRIST only hath merited theſe bleſſings for us, and that he hath no partner with him in this; or there is no other hath merited theſe bleſſings for us, nor can we ourſelves merit them.

1. No other hath merited theſe bleſſings for us. Not to take notice of what the Papiſts ſay of the meritoriouſneſs of our works of ſupererogation, which go into the treaſury of the church, and make up a public ſtock of merit, to be diſpoſed and dealt out by the pope at his diſcretion; they have, by a moſt unparallelled blaſmemy, joined the virgin Mary with CHRIST in the work of our redemption, and ſome of them have been ſo impiouſly bold, as to parallel the virtue of her milk with the efficacy of CHRIST's blood. And though CHRIST ſay, that "he trode the wine-preſs of his Father's wrath alone, and of the people there was none with him;" yet Bonaventure in his meditations ventures to corrupt the text, by this fooliſh gloſs; *Nullus erat tecum Rectè, Domine, ſed erat tetum fœmina.* "Right, "LORD,

"LORD, there was no man with thee, but there was "a woman, viz. thy mother." SERM. CCXXVIII.

2. Nor can we our ſelves do any thing whereby we can merit theſe bleſſings at GOD's hands. Conſidering that we received our being, and all that we are and have from GOD, and upon account of theſe benefits are obliged to love him and ſerve him to the utmoſt; what a ſenſeleſs piece of arrogance is it to ſay, that a creature can merit any thing at GOD's hand? Whatever we give GOD is of his own, and when we have done all we can, we have done no more than our duty. And can any man challenge any reward for doing what he ought to do? Can any man make ſatisfaction for a fault that he hath committed, by doing his duty? that is, by not committing another. It is a ſure rule, *Debitum debito non ſolvitur.* We are indebted to GOD by the breach of his law: but we cannot quit this debt, and ſatisfy for this breach, by not breaking it again, becauſe we owe to GOD all poſſible obedience.

Beſides that all our obedience is imperfect, and is ſo far from meriting, that it ſtands in need of pardon; and can a man demerit, and merit by the ſame action? Can he who deſerves to be puniſhed for an action, becauſe he did it no better, deſerve to be rewarded for the ſame action, becauſe he did it ſo well? And to ſay that CHRIST hath merited that our imperfect obedience ſhould merit, either ſignifies only this, that CHRIST hath merited that our imperfect obedience ſhould be accepted by GOD, notwithſtanding it's imperfection; (and this is true, but nothing to the purpoſe of merit;) or elſe it ſignifies, that CHRIST hath merited that that which is nowiſe meritorious, ſhould be ſo; that is, that the nature of things ſhould be altered; which is not only falſe, but ſenſeleſs.

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Secondly, to perſuade us to live as we believe. If we profeſs to believe the goſpel to be true, then let our hearts and lives be ſuitable to thoſe truths which we believe. If we "believe JESUS to be the CHRIST, "the Son of GOD," we believe the doctrine which he delivered to the world to be from GOD, and conſequently to be true; we believe the precepts of it are holy, and juſt, and good, and that they are neceſſary to be obſerved by us, as being in order to our peace and happineſs; we believe that the promiſes of the goſpel are "all yea, and amen," and ſhall every tittle of them be made good; we believe that the threatnings of the goſpel ſhall all punctually be fulfilled. Now how ought men to live that believe all this? Having a law given us which hath the ſanction of ſuch promiſes and threatnings, ought we not to conform our lives to it; and charge ourſelves with obedience to all thoſe precepts of piety towards GOD, and purity and temperance in the government of our ſelves, and juſtice and righteouſneſs in our dealings with others, which are contained in this new law of the goſpel? If the goſpel have promiſed eternal life and happineſs to thoſe who do conſcientiouſly abſtain from ſin, and follow holineſs; "having theſe "promiſes," ought we not to "cleanſe our ſelves "from all filthineſs both of fleſh and ſpirit, perfect-"ing holineſs in the fear of GOD?" If the goſpel hath threatned, that at the end of the world, CHRIST will "come in flaming fire," &c. if we believe theſe things ſhall be, "what manner of perſons ought we "to be in all holy converſation and godlineſs?"

I have formerly ſhewed at large, how unbecoming it is for any man, that profeſſeth himſelf a Chriſtian, to live unſuitably to his profeſſion; that it is the greateſt diſparagement to the goſpel, and the higheſt reflection

reflection upon it that can be; and that it is infinitely dangerous to us; and though theſe be very proper conſiderations, yet becauſe I have formerly urged them, I ſhall not now enforce my exhortation with theſe arguments; but ſhall mention two other conſiderations, and ſo conclude. SERM. CCXXVIII.

Firſt, if our lives be not anſwerable to our belief, our faith will be ineffectual to all intents and purpoſes.

Secondly, a life unſuitable to our belief is the highway to infidelity and atheiſm.

Firſt, if our lives be not anſwerable to our belief, our faith will be ineffectual to all real intents and purpoſes.

1. It will be ineffectual to give us the reputation of Chriſtians among wiſe and diſcerning perſons. We profeſs to believe the goſpel; but if we live contrary to it, our profeſſion is *proteſtatio contra factum*, and therefore not credible; becauſe our actions contradict it. The conſtant tenor of a man's actions is a more credible and emphatical declaration of the inward ſenſe of his heart, and ſhews better what the man believes, than the moſt ſolemn profeſſion in words. When our words are not confirmed by our actions, they are but an empty ſound, and ſignify nothing. I may allude to that of St. Paul, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. "Though a man have all faith," yet if he be deſtitute of the true effect of faith, "charity, he "is but as a ſounding braſs, and a tinkling cym-"bal." St. James doth very well ſet forth the inefficacy of ſuch a faith, by this ſimilitude, Jam. ii. 15, 16, 17. "If a brother or ſiſter be naked, and "deſtitute of daily food, and one of you ſay unto "them, Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled; "notwithſtanding ye give them not thoſe things "which are needful to the body; what doth it pro-"fit?

SERM. CCXXVIII. " fit? Even ſo faith, if it hath not works, is dead." Men are not ſo eaſily cozened, as we think they are. Diſcerning men will not be impoſed upon and put off with a formal and empty profeſſion of faith, when there is nothing in our lives to anſwer it. It is not ſtanding up in the church, and profeſſing that we believe in GOD, and in JESUS CHRIST, that he was born, and died, and roſe again, and at the end of the world will come to judge the quick and the dead; that will perſuade men that we are Chriſtians. Men will look into our lives, and examine our actions, and enquire into our converſations; by theſe they will judge of the truth and reality of our profeſſion. Let us not delude our ſelves, and think to paſs for Chriſtians upon theſe terms, among any that know how to make a right judgment of things. We may cozen our ſelves, but we cannot cheat others, who are not ſo partial to us, as we are apt to be to our ſelves. It is not our winking that hinders others from ſeeing us.

Nay, I go farther; it is not an earneſt contending for fundamental articles of our chriſtian faith, if we live contrary to them, that will ſatisfy any wiſe man that we believe them; much leſs an intemperate zeal for indifferent opinions in religion. Such were the doctrines concerning the neceſſity, on the one hand, and the unlawfulneſs of circumciſion, on the other: but the aſſent to the one opinion or the other in theſe matters; " neither circumciſion availeth any " thing, nor uncircumciſion; but faith that worketh " by love; the new creature, the keeping of the " commandments of GOD," as the apoſtle in ſeveral places expreſſeth it. Men ſtand much upon the title of orthodox, by which is uſually underſtood, not believing the doctrine of CHRIST or his apoſtles, but

but ſuch opinions as are in vogue among ſuch a par- SERM.
ty, ſuch ſyſtems of divinity as have been compiled CCXXVIII.
in haſte by thoſe whom we have in admiration; and whatever is not conſonant to theſe little bodies of divinity, though poſſibly it agree well enough with the word of GOD, is error and hereſy; and whoever maintains it, can hardly paſs for a Chriſtian among ſome angry and perverſe people. I do not intend to plead for any error; but I would not have chriſtianity chiefly meaſured by matters of opinion. I know no ſuch error and hereſy as a wicked life. That man believes the goſpel beſt, who lives moſt according to it. Though no man can have a worſe opinion of the Socinian doctrine than I have, yet I had rather a man ſhould deny the ſatisfaction of CHRIST, than believe it, and abuſe it to the encouragement of ſin. Of the two, I have more hopes of him that denies the divinity of CHRIST, and lives otherwiſe ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in the world, than of the man who owns CHRIST to be the Son of GOD, and lives like a child of the devil.

2. Such a faith as hath not an anſwerable life will be ineffectual to the purpoſe of juſtification and ſalvation. So St. James tells us, it is a "dead faith, "and profits nothing," that no man is juſtified by it, nor will it ſave any man. "CHRIST is the "author of eternal ſalvation to them whom" ſo believe his doctrine, as to "obey it: he will come in "flaming fire, to render vengeance," not only "to "them that do not believe," but "to them that do "not obey the goſpel." It will not be ſufficient at the day of judgment, to plead our profeſſion of faith in CHRIST, and to ſay, LORD, LORD, have we not "propheſied in thy name, and in thy name have "caſt out devils, and in thy name have done many "wondrous

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" wondrous works?" Doing all this in CHRIST's name, implies that they profeſs'd to believe in him; but notwithſtanding all this, if they be " workers of ini- " quity," CHRIST will ſay to ſuch, " Depart from " me, I know you not," If our SAVIOUR make a true and proper repreſentation of the day of judgment, and the proceedings of it, Matt. xxv. men's faith ſhall then be tried by the real fruits and effects of it; then the enquiry ſhall be, how men have lived? what good they have done, or omitted and neglected? and accordingly ſentence will be paſſed upon them. Nay, ſuch a faith is ſo far from ſaving, that it will be an aggravation of our condemnation, and ſink us the deeper into hell. " There is one that condemneth " you, even JESUS in whom ye truſt."

Secondly, a life unſuitable to our belief is the high way to infidelity and atheiſm, to bring others and our ſelves to it.

1. To bring others to infidelity and atheiſm, and to confirm them in it. What can be a more effectual bar to keep heathens, and Jews, and Turks from entertaining the goſpel? What can be a greater confirmation of them in their infidelity, than ſo to miſrepreſent chriſtian religion to them, as we do by our unſuitable lives? What can be a ſtronger prejudice againſt it, to men who do not look narrowly into it, but only ſee it at a diſtance, than to ſee what fruit it produces in the lives of Chriſtians? May they not invert that proverbial ſpeech of our SAVIOUR's, " Does a vine ſend forth thorns?" If chriſtianity were ſuch a holy inſtitution, how comes it to paſs that Chriſtians are ſo wicked? If JESUS CHRIST were ſo excellent a maſter, we ſhoud ſee it in his ſcholars; *ſi Chriſtus ſancta docuiſſet, chriſtiani ſancte vixiſſent*, as Salvian ſpeaks. And it is the way to bring

bring men to atheiſm. What more like to take men off from all religion, than to ſee the religion, which pretends to be the beſt in the world, repreſented by the lives of Chriſtians at ſuch a diſadvantage, as if it were a barren and fruitleſs, and ineffectual thing, and as if they who profeſs it, did believe it to be a lie, and gave no credit at all to the doctrines of it.

2. It is the way to bring ourſelves to infidelity and atheiſm. As an erroneous judgment and underſtanding hath uſually an evil influence upon men's lives, ſo much more a vicious and corrupt life hath a bad influence upon men's underſtandings. It is ſo uneaſy a thing for men to act contrary to their reaſon, and againſt the dictates of their underſtandings, that men, for their own quiet, and in their own defence, will bend their judgments, and make them comply with the intereſt of their luſts. Men's affections, which way ſoever they incline, ſet a biaſs upon their underſtandings; and this doth not only proceed from the nature of the thing, but from the juſt judgment of GOD. 2 Theſſ. ii. 10, 11, 12. the apoſtle tells us, that "thoſe who receive not the truth "in the love of it, that they may be ſaved; GOD "will ſend them ſtrong deluſions, to believe lies; "that they all may be damned, who believe not "the truth, but have pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs." If men once have "pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs," it will not be long before they give over "believing "the truth," becauſe GOD by his juſt judgment will give them over to themſelves, to follow the biaſs of their own corrupt hearts, which inclines them "to "believe lies." Of all perſons in the world, a wicked and unholy Chriſtian is moſt like to turn a ſpeculative infidel and atheiſt; and none ſo likely to fall into

into this groſs darkneſs, as thoſe who reſiſt and quench ſo great a light as that of the goſpel is, which they profeſs to believe.

SERMON CCXXIX.

Of the miracles wrought in confirmation of chriſtianity.

HEB. ii. 4.

GOD *alſo bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the holy Ghoſt, according to his own will.*

SERM. CCXXIX. WHoever impartially conſiders the chriſtian religion, cannot but acknowledge the laws and precepts of it to be ſo reaſonable; and the practice of them ſo evidently to tend, not only to the happineſs of particular perſons, but to the peace and welfare of the world; and the promiſes and threatnings of the goſpel, which are the great motives to perſuade men to the obedience of thoſe laws, to be ſo agreeable to the natural hopes and fears which mankind were always poſſeſſed withal; that upon this conſideration, it might juſtly be expected, that the doctrine of chriſtianity, upon the firſt publication of it, ſhould have been entertained with a readineſs of mind proportionable to the reaſonableneſs of it.

Or if the bare reaſonableneſs of it be not thought inducement enough, we may eaſily imagine, how GOD, if he had pleaſed, could upon the firſt appear-

ance

ance of this religion in the world, have given it ſuch advantages, as would mightily have contributed to the more eaſy reception and entertainment of it. He could have ordered things ſo, that our bleſſed SAVIOUR, the author of this doctrine, ſhould have been, as the Jews expected, a great temporal monarch; he could have raiſed him to that dignity, and have armed him with that authority, as muſt have given him a mighty power and influence over mankind, and would have gained the great, and the wiſe, and the learned to have been active inſtruments in the propagating of this religion, and in perſuading men to the embracing of it. SERM. CCXXIX.

But he, "whoſe ways are above our ways, and "whoſe thoughts are above our thoughts, as the "heavens are above the earth," did not think fit to have it promoted and carried on this way; nay, he ſeems on purpoſe to have ſtrip'd it of all ſecular advantages, that it might be perfectly free from all ſuſpicion of a worldly intereſt and deſign, and that it might be evident to all the world, that it was "a plant "which his own right-hand had planted;" and that it did not owe it's eſtabliſhment to the authority, and wiſdom, and contrivance of men, but to the power of GOD, and to the immediate favour and contrivance of heaven.

And now being thus deſtitute of all worldly aſſiſtance, though never ſo reaſonable in itſelf, it was not likely that it ſhould be able with ſucceſs to grapple with the luſts and corruptions of men, to which it was ſo directly oppoſite; nor with the ſtrong prejudices of their education in a contrary religion, which are always hard to be overcome; nor with the temporal intereſts of men, which were all at that time to be renounced and quitted for it's ſake;

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ſake; unleſs it had ſome other advantages to make way for it, and to recommend it to the minds of men. For having no ſecular baits and allurements to tempt men to the profeſſion of it, no earthly contrivance and aſſiſtance to ſupport it and bear it out; but on the contrary, the moſt violent and powerful oppoſition raiſed againſt it; it was neceſſary that thoſe who offered it to the world, ſhould be able to give credit to it ſome other way, and to produce very ſenſible and convincing arguments of another kind: otherwiſe they might have diſpaired of ever conquering the prejudices of men againſt it, and of perſuading them to embrace that religion, which was ſo apparently contrary both to their inclinations and intereſts.

So that in theſe circumſtances, in order to the full conviction of men, that thoſe, who publiſhed this doctrine to them, came from GOD and were commiſſioned and ſent by him to teach the world, it was very fitting, that GOD himſelf ſhould give ſome remarkable teſtimony to the firſt preachers of it: and this, the text tells us, he did by "bearing witneſs to "them with ſigns and wonders, and with divers mi-"racles, and gifts of the holy Ghoſt."

For the better underſtanding of theſe words, we ſhall do well to reflect upon the deſign of this epiſtle, which was to eſtabliſh the Jews, who had but newly embraced chriſtianity, in the ſtedfaſt belief and profeſſion of it, notwithſtanding the troubles and perſecutions which attended it; and to this end the apoſtle repreſents to them, that the goſpel was delivered with more authority, and had a greater confirmation given to it, than the law. The law was delivered by angels, but the goſpel by the Son of GOD: and if the contempt of the law was ſo ſeverely puniſhed, what

what might they expect would be the fate of thoſe who ſhould ſlight and reject the goſpel? "If the "word ſpoken by angels was ſtedfaſt, and every "tranſgreſſion and diſobedience received a juſt re- "compence of reward; how ſhall we eſcape, if we "neglect ſo great ſalvation, which at firſt began to "be ſpoken by the LORD, and was confirmed unto "us by them that heard him? GOD alſo bearing "them witneſs, with ſigns and wonders, and with "divers miracles, and gifts of the holy Ghoſt, ac- "cording to his own will. Συνεπιμαρτυρῶντος τοῦ "Θεοῦ, GOD adjoining this farther teſtimony of ſigns "and wonders." The apoſtles teſtified what they had heard from our LORD; and to give credit and confirmation to their teſtimony, GOD was pleaſed to endow them with miraculous gifts; "he bare them "witneſs with ſigns, and wonders, and miracles." So likewiſe, Acts xiv. 3. it is ſaid, that "GOD gave "teſtimony to the word of his grace, granting ſigns "and wonders to be done by the apoſtles." Sometimes there are more words put together, to expreſs the giving of this miraculous power. Acts ii. 22. "JESUS of Nazareth, approved of GOD by miracles, "and wonders, and ſigns." 2 Cor. xii. 12. St. Paul, ſpeaking of himſelf, ſays, "the ſigns of an "apoſtle were wrought among you, in all patience, "in ſigns, and wonders, and miracles." Theſe were the marks of an extraordinary and immediate commiſſion, ſuch as was that of the apoſtles.

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It is to no purpoſe nicely to enquire into the difference of theſe words, σημεῖα, τέρατα, δυνάμεις, "ſigns, wonders, and miracles," becauſe in all probability there is no difference intended, it being the manner of the Hebrews, when they would expreſs a great thing, or a great degree of any thing, to heap

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ſeveral words together, ſignifying the ſame thing. So we find, Deut. v. 6. "Thou ſhalt love the LORD "thy GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, "and with all thy might," that is, greatly, with a very ardent and intenſe degree of affection. So likewiſe in the text, GOD is ſaid to "bear witneſs to the "apoſtles with ſigns, and wonders, and miracles," that is, in a very eminent and extraordinary manner, by great and wonderful miracles.

From theſe words three things offer themſelves to our conſideration.

Firſt, that miracles are a divine teſtimony given to a perſon or doctrine. "GOD bearing them teſti-"mony by ſigns, and wonders, and miracles."

Secondly, that GOD gave this teſtimony to the apoſtles and firſt preachers of chriſtianity, in a very eminent manner: for ſo the phraſe ſignifies; ſo many words being multiplied to expreſs the greatneſs of the thing.

Thirdly, we will conſider the reaſon why miracles are now ceaſed in the church, and have been for ſeveral ages, ſo that there have been no footſteps of them for a long time.

Firſt, that miracles are a divine teſtimony given to a perſon or doctrine. GOD is here ſaid to "bear "witneſs to the apoſtles with ſigns, and wonders, "and divers miracles;" that is, the miracles which GOD enabled them to work, were an evidence that their doctrine was from GOD.

And becauſe there is ſome difficulty in this argument, therefore that we may the more diſtinctly underſtand of what force this argument or teſtimony of miracles is, to prove the divinity of any perſon or doctrine, it will be requiſite clearly to ſtate theſe two things.

I. What a miracle is. II. In

II. In what circumſtances, and with what limitations, miracles are a ſufficient teſtimony to the truth and divinity of any doctrine. The clearing of theſe two things ſhall be my work at this time. SERM. CCXXIX.

I. What a miracle is. The ſhorteſt and plaineſt deſcription I can give of it is this, that it is a ſupernatural effect, evident and wonderful to ſenſe. So that there are two things neceſſary to a miracle.

1. That it be a ſupernatural effect.

2. that it be evident and wonderful to ſenſe.

1. That it be a ſupernatural effect. By a ſupernatural effect, I mean ſuch an effect, as either in itſelf and in it's own nature, or in the manner and circumſtances of it, exceeds any natural power that we know of to produce it. For there are ſome things that are miraculous in themſelves; others that are only miraculous in the manner and circumſtances of their operation. For inſtance, the reſurrection of one from the dead, is a thing which in itſelf is ſupernatural, and an effect above any power that we know of in nature to produce; but the healing of ſeveral diſeaſes, and the ſpeaking of languages, are not things wich are in themſelves and in their nature ſupernatural; for we ſee that they may be acquired by natural ſkill and induſtry: but to heal all ſorts of diſeaſes in an inſtant, and by a word, and without the application of natural means; and on a ſudden to ſpeak languages which a man never learned; theſe are things, which though they be not in their nature, yet in ſuch circumſtances as theſe, they are ſupernatural.

I ſay, that a ſupernatural effect is that which is above any natural power that we know of to produce; by which I do not mean, that miracles are always an immediate effect of the divine power, and conſequently that GOD alone can work them. For angels,

ERM. CCXXIX. good or bad, may do ſuch things, as exceed any natural power known to us, and ſuch as we cannot diſtinguiſh by any certain marks and characters from thoſe effects which are wrought by the immediate power of GOD; and if we cannot diſtinguiſh them, they are equally miracles to us. When the angel ſlew 185000 in the camp of the Aſſyrians in one night, this ought in all reaſon to be reckoned a miracle; and yet this, though done by the command of GOD, an angel might do by his own power and ſtrength; for "they excel in ſtrength:" but what limitations to ſet to their power, we cannot tell, only it is finite; ſo that excepting thoſe things, which the ſcripture hath peculiarly appropriated to GOD, we cannot ſay what it is that an angel cannot do.

The ſame may be ſaid concerning evil angels. The devil may work wonders, or aſſiſt his inſtruments to work them. So Pharaoh's magicians wrought ſeveral miracles by the power of the devil, and did ſome of the very ſame things that Moſes and Aaron did, either really or in appearance, and it is all one whether. For he, who, to men's ſenſes, turns a rod into a ſerpent, works as great a miracle to me, as he who really does it; and if I am not to believe a thing to be a miracle, when to my ſenſes it appears to be wrought, I am never to believe any, unleſs I could make ſome difference between thoſe miracles which are real, and thoſe that only appear to be wrought; for if we know not how to diſtinguiſh them, they are to us all one as if they were real: but if they may be diſtinguiſhed, then there will be need of another miracle, to ſhew which are real and which not; and the ſame queſtion and doubt will ariſe about that miracle, and ſo without end.

So

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So that I do not ſee what is gained by ſaying, that Pharaoh's magicians did only delude men's ſenſes, but did not turn their rods really into ſerpents, as Aaron did his; becauſe this may be ſaid on one ſide, as well as on the other: for to the ſtanders by there was no difference, but the one ſeemed to the ſenſes of the beholders, to be as real as the other; and the text makes no difference, but ſays, "the magicians did "in like manner; for they caſt down every man his "rod, and they became ſerpents," only Aaron's had this advantage, that "his rod ſwallowed up their "rods:" but the main difference was here, Moſes and Aaron wrought ſuch miracles, as the magicians could not work, neither really, nor in appearance: for when Aaron by ſmiting the duſt with his rod, had turned it into lice, it is ſaid that the magicians attempted to do ſo with their enchantments, but could not, and then they yielded, and acknowledged that it was "the finger of GOD." And if they had not been thus plainly overcome, but could, to all appearance of ſenſe, have done all thoſe things which Moſes and Aaron did, it might juſtly have been diſputed which had been the true prophets.

So that the devil and his inſtruments may work miracles. Moſes plainly ſuppoſeth that a falſe prophet, who comes to ſeduce the people to idolatry, may work a true ſign or wonder, Deut. xiii. 1, 2. "If there ariſe among you a prophet, or a dreamer "of dreams, and giveth thee a ſign or a wonder; "and the ſign or the wonder come to paſs, whereof "he ſpake unto thee, ſaying, let us go after other "gods." And our bleſſed SAVIOUR expreſly foretels, Matth. xxiv. that "falſe chriſts, and falſe pro"phets ſhall ariſe after his death, and ſhew great "ſigns and wonders."

SERM. CCXXIX. From all which it is evident that it is not of the eſſence of a miracle, (as many have thought) that it be an immediate effect of the divine power. It is ſufficient, that it exceed any natural power that we know of to produce it. And if ſuch effects be not to be eſteemed miracles, a miracle would ſignify nothing; becauſe no man could know when it is wrought, nor diſtinguiſh it from thoſe effects which appear to be miraculous, but are not. This is the firſt property or condition of a miracle, that it be ſupernatural, that is, ſuch an effect as exceeds any natural power that we know of to produce it. But then,

2. There is another condition alſo required to a miracle, that it be an effect evident and wonderful to ſenſe: for if we do not ſee it, it is to us as if it were not, and can be no teſtimony or proof of any thing, becauſe itſelf ſtands in need of another miracle to give teſtimony to it, and to prove that it was wrought; and neither in ſcripture, nor in profane authors, nor in common uſe of ſpeech, is any thing called a miracle, but what falls under the notice of our ſenſes: a miracle being nothing elſe but a thing wonderful to ſenſe; and the very end and deſign of it, is to be a ſenſible proof and conviction to us of ſome thing which we do not ſee.

And for want of this condition, tranſubſtantiation, if it were true, would be no miracle: it would indeed be very ſupernatural, but for all that it would not be a ſign or wonder; for a ſign or wonder is always a ſenſible thing, ſomething that is wonderful and aſtoniſhing to ſenſe, otherwiſe it is no ſign or wonder. That ſuch a change as is pretended in tranſubſtantiation ſhould really be wrought, and yet there ſhould be no ſign and appearance of it, is a thing very wonderful; but not to ſenſe: for our

ſenſes

ſenſes perceive no change, the bread and wine to all our ſenſes remaining juſt as they were before. Now that a thing ſhould remain to all appearance juſt as it was, hath nothing at all of wonder in it. We wonder indeed when we ſee a ſtrange thing done: but no man wonders when he ſees nothing done. SERM. CCXXIX.

So that to ſpeak the truth, tranſubſtantiation, if they will have it a miracle, is ſuch a miracle as any man may work, that hath but confidence to face men down that he works it, and the fortune to be believed. And however they of the church of Rome are wont to magnify their prieſts, chiefly upon the account of this miracle, which they ſay they can work every day, and every hour, if they pleaſe; yet I cannot underſtand, how it magnifies them ſo much: for when this great work (as they call it) is done, there is nothing more appears to be done, than if there were no miracle. Now ſuch a miracle, as to all appearance is no miracle, I ſee no reaſon why a proteſtant miniſter may not work as often as he pleaſeth, as well as they: or if he can but have the patience to let it alone, it will work itſelf: for certainly nothing in the world is eaſier than to let a thing be as it is, and by ſpeaking a few words over it, to make it juſt what it was before. In ſhort, a miracle is a wonder to ſenſe, and where a man ſees nothing that is ſtrange done, there is no miracle: for if he will call it a miracle, when things remain juſt as they were, and no ſenſible change is made in them, every man may every day work a thouſand ſuch miracles. I come now in the

II. Place, to conſider in what circumſtances, and with what cautions and limitations miracles do give teſtimony to the truth and divinity of any doctrine; for inſtance, of the chriſtian doctrine: and for the

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clearing of this matter, I ſhall lay down theſe propoſitions.

1. That the entire proof of the chriſtian doctrine or religion conſiſts of many conſiderations, which, taken together, make up a full demonſtration of the truth of it, when perhaps no one of them taken ſingly and by itſelf, is a convincing and undeniable proof.

The chriſtian religion hath all the characters of divinity upon it, which any religion can be expected to have, whether we conſider the doctrine of it, in which there is nothing unworthy of GOD; for it makes ſuch a repreſentation of GOD, and gives ſuch directions concerning his worſhip, as is moſt agreeable to thoſe apprehenſions which the wiſeſt men have always had of GOD, and of that ſervice which is moſt proper to be given to him. Indeed it declares ſomething concerning GOD, which is very myſterious and paſt our comprehenſions: but this ought not to offend us, ſince natural light always did acknowledge the divine nature to be incomprehenſible.

The precepts likewiſe of this religion are highly reaſonable, and ſuch as plainly tend to the perfection and happineſs of human nature; and the arguments to enforce theſe precepts, are not only very powerful in themſelves, but very ſuitable to the natural hopes and fears of men.

Or if we conſider the author of this doctrine, our bleſſed SAVIOUR, he will appear to be a divine perſon, and "a teacher ſent from GOD," by the clear predictions concerning him long before he came, which when he came were exactly fulfilled in him; by the miracles he wrought to give teſtimony of him; by the eminent holineſs and virtue of his life;

life; and by innumerable things which he foretold concerning himſelf, the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and the diſperſion of the jewiſh nation, and the ſucceſs of his doctrine in the world, which were all afterwards punctually accompliſhed. All theſe proved him to be an extraordinary perſon. But he was likewiſe declared to be "the Son of GOD," by a voice from heaven, and by his reſurrection from the dead.

Or if we conſider the firſt publiſhers of this doctrine, to whom "GOD bare witneſs, with ſigns and "wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the "holy Ghoſt;" and the wonderful ſucceſs they met withal, notwithſtanding the outward meanneſs of their perſons, inſomuch that their doctrine very ſuddenly prevailed, and paſt like lightning through the world, and in the ſpace of a few years, ſpread itſelf beyond the utmoſt bounds of the vaſt Roman empire, and this in deſpite of the moſt powerful oppoſitions and fierceſt perſecutions that ever was raiſed againſt any religion; ſo that like the children of Iſrael in Ægypt it did thrive under affliction, and the more it was oppreſt, the more it grew and multiplied; becauſe there was a divine power that did viſibly accompany the firſt publiſhers of it, and men "were not able to reſiſt the ſpirit whereby they "ſpake."

All theſe together make up a full and convincing demonſtration of the truth and divinity of the chriſtian doctrine: and yet perhaps no one of theſe alone is a ſufficient proof of it. For though a doctrine be never ſo reaſonable in itſelf, this is no certain argument that it is from GOD, if no teſtimony from heaven be given to it; becauſe it may be the reſult and iſſue of human reaſon and diſcourſe: and though

a doctrine

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a doctrine be atteſted by miracles, yet the matter of it may be ſo unreaſonable and abſurd, ſo unworthy of GOD, and ſo contrary to the natural notions which men have of him, that no miracles can be ſufficient to give confirmation to it; and therefore in ſome caſes the ſcripture forbids men to hearken to a prophet, though he work a miracle. Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3. "If there ariſe among you a prophet, or a "dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a ſign, or a "wonder; and the ſign or the wonder come to "paſs, whereof he ſpake unto thee, ſaying, let us "go after other gods (which thou haſt not known) "and let us ſerve them: thou ſhalt not hearken un-"to the words of that prophet." And the reaſon is given, ver. 5. "becauſe he hath ſpoken to turn you "away from the LORD your GOD." From whence it is plain, that a miracle is not ſufficient to eſtabliſh the worſhip of a falſe god.

The ſum of what I have ſaid is this, that we do not found our belief of chriſtianity upon any one argument taken by itſelf; but upon the whole evidence which we are able to produce for it, in which there is nothing wanting that is proper and reaſonable to prove any religion to be from GOD.

2. But yet miracles are the principal external proof and confirmation of the divinity of a doctrine. I told you before, that ſome doctrines are ſo abſurd, that a miracle is not a ſufficient proof of them: but if a doctrine be ſuch as is no ways unworthy of GOD, nor contrary to thoſe notions which we have of him, miracles are the higheſt teſtimony that can be given to it, and have always been owned by mankind for an evidence of inſpiration. And therefore Nicodemus takes it for an acknowledged principle, that miracles are a ſign of "a teacher ſent from GOD," John iii.

2. "We

4. "We know that thou art a teacher come from 'God: for none can do these miracles which thou 'dost, except God be with him." And the scripture constantly resolves the divinity of any person or doctrine into miracles, as the chief external evidence that they are from God. This was the testimony which God gave to Moses, to satisfy the people of Israel that he had sent him, Exod. iv. 1. "And 'Moses answered, and said, but behold, they will 'not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for 'they will say, the Lord hath not appeared unto 'thee." Upon this God tells Moses, that he would give him a power of miracles, to be an evidence to them, that "they may believe, that the 'God of their fathers, of Abraham, Isaac, and 'Jacob, hath appeared unto thee." And all along in the old testament, when God sent his prophets to make any new revelation, or upon any extraordinary message, he always gave credit to them by some sign or wonder. And when he sent his son into the world, he bare witness to him, by more and greater miracles than Moses or any of the prophets had wrought. And to this testimony both our Saviour himself and the apostles appeal, as the great evidence of the divinity of their doctrine. When John the baptist sent his disciples to our Saviour, to be satisfied whether he were the Messias, he refers them to his miracles, Matth. xi. 4, 5. "Go and "shew John again those things which ye do hear "and see. The blind receive their sight, and the "lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf "hear, the dead are raised up." And John v. 36. "But I have greater witness than that of John: for "the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of

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"me

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"me, that the Father hath ſent me." And Acts ii. 22. "JESUS of Nazareth, a man approved of "GOD among you, ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀποδεδειγμένον εἰς "ὑμᾶς, a man demonſtrated by GOD to you by mi- "racles, and wonders, and ſigns, which he did in "the midſt of you." And Acts xiv. 3. it is ſaid, that when the apoſtles preached the goſpel, "GOD "gave teſtimony unto the word of his grace, and "granted ſigns and wonders to be done by their "hands." From all which it is plain, that our religion appeals to miracles, as the great external confirmation of it.

3. Eſpecially if miracles have all the circumſtances of advantage given to them which they are capable of; if they be many and great, public and unqueſtionable, and univerſal, and of long continuance. And ſuch were the miracles wrought by Moſes, and by our SAVIOUR and his apoſtles, which for their nature and quality, for the number and continuance of them, and for all other circumſtances, that may give credit to them, and argue them to be from GOD, are in no degree to be equalled by thoſe which any other religion hath pretended to.

And in theſe circumſtances, miracles alone are in moſt caſes a ſufficient proof of the divinity of a doctrine: for there is a great deal of difference in reaſon to be made between one or two ſtrange and miraculous effects, and thoſe not of the higheſt and moſt unqueſtionable rank of miracles neither, privately wrought, and before few witneſſes: and a long continued ſeries of miracles of all kinds, and ſuch as are univerſally acknowledged to be above the power of nature, and thoſe publickly wrought in the face and view of the world, in every city and country, by a great many perſons, for many years, yea for many ages

ages together. The former may be doubted of, but the latter carry ſo ſenſible a conviction with them, that it is not credible, that the divine goodneſs ſhould permit ſo great and overpowering a teſtimony to be given to a falſhood. SERM. CCXXIX.

4. It cannot be denied but that GOD doth ſometimes permit miracles to be wrought for the countenancing of a falſe doctrine. This the heathens pretended to at their temples and oracles; and it is not incredible, that GOD ſhould permit the devil to do ſeveral ſtrange and extraordinary things, though it be certain that there was a great deal of cheat and impoſture mingled with them. To be ſure the ſcripture own the working of miracles by falſe prophets. Moſes takes notice of it in his law, and provides againſt it as a caſe that might happen; and our SAVIOUR expreſly fortels it, Matt. xxiv. and ſo does St. Paul, 2 Theſſ. ii. that "the man of ſin ſhould come after "the working of Satan, with power, and ſigns, and "wonders of lies;" that is, ſhould work miracles to countenance his falſe and impious doctrines. And the ſcripture likewiſe tells us, for what reaſon GOD does ſometimes permit this to be done. For the trial of the good. Deut. xiii. 3. "For the LORD "your GOD proveth you, to know whether you "love the LORD your GOD with all your hearts." And for the hardening of the wicked, by the juſt judgment of GOD. 2 Theſſ. ii. 10, 11, 12. "Becauſe they received not the love of the truth, that "they might be ſaved. And for this cauſe GOD "ſhall ſend them ἐνέργειαν πλάνης, the efficacy of "impoſture, that they ſhould believe a lie; that "they all might be damned, who believed not the "truth, but had pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs."

5. and laſtly, GOD never permits miracles to be wrought

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wrought for the confirmation of a falſe doctrine, but he affords ſufficient marks, whereby thoſe who are free and impartial enquirers after truth, and ſincere lovers of it, may diſtinguiſh truth from impoſture. So our SAVIOUR tells us, that "the elect," that is, the true and ſincere Chriſtians, ſhould not be deceived by the "ſigns and wonders of the falſe Chriſts "and falſe prophets." And therefore he was not afraid of having the credit of his doctrine weakened, by foretelling that falſe prophets ſhould work miracles; becauſe he knew, when the devil had done his utmoſt, the difference would be apparent enough between the confirmation which he had given to the chriſtian doctrine, and what the devil ſhould be able to give to his inſtruments. As,

1. Either the doctrine would be abſurd in itſelf, and ſuch as no miracles can confirm. As in the caſe which Moſes inſtanceth in, of a miracle wrought to ſeduce them from the worſhip of the one true GOD, who is naturally known, to the worſhip of idols. Or elſe,

2. It would be contrary to that doctrine which had already had a far greater and more divine confirmation. And this likewiſe is another reaſon intimated by Moſes, why the people ſhould not hearken to a prophet that would ſeduce them to idolatry, though he ſhould work a miracle; "becauſe he hath "ſpoken to turn you away from the LORD your "GOD, which brought you out of the land of "Egypt," that is, from that GOD who hath demonſtrated himſelf to them by ſuch a ſeries of great and unqueſtionable miracles, as ought in all reaſon to bear down any ſingle ſign and wonder.

And the caſe is the ſame, if miracles ſhould now be pretended for the confirmation of any thing plainly

contrary

contrary to the chriſtian doctrine, which being eſta- SERM. CCXXIX.
bliſhed by ſuch miracles as never were wrought in the world upon any other occaſion, it cannot be thought reaſonable, that any evidence, inferior to this, ſhould be able to control it, or to give credit to any thing that contradicted it. And in this caſe the apoſtle hath expreſly forbidden Chriſtians to hearken to a contrary doctrine, "though they themſelves, or an "angel from heaven ſhould preach it," Gal. i. 8. Therefore St. Paul expreſly lays down this rule, whereby we may judge what miraculous powers are from the Spirit of GOD, and what not, 1 Cor. xii. 1. "Now concerning ſpiritual gift, brethren, I would "not have you ignorant," that is, what miraculous gifts are from the Spirit of GOD, and what not; and then, ver. 3. he gives this rule, "Wherefore I "give you to underſtand, that no man, ſpeaking by "the Spirit of GOD, calleth JESUS accurſed: and "that no man can ſay, that JESUS is the LORD, "but by the holy Ghoſt;" that is, if any man pretend to be inſpired, and to be endowed with a miraculous power, and yet blaſphemeth CHRIST, this Spirit is not from GOD: but if any man be endowed with this power, and acknowledge CHRIST, we may ſafely conclude this power to be from the holy Ghoſt. The very ſame rule St. John lays down yet more plainly, 1 John iv. 1, 2, 3. "Believe not every "ſpirit," that is, not every one that pretends to the gifts and inſpirations of the Spirit; "but try the "ſpirits, whether they are of GOD: becauſe many "falſe prophets are gone out into the world. Here- "by know ye the Spirit of GOD: every ſpirit that "confeſſeth that JESUS CHRIST is come in the fleſh, "is of GOD: and every ſpirit that confeſſeth not "that JESUS CHRIST is come in the fleſh, is not

of

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" of GOD." And ver. 6. " We are of GOD; " that knoweth GOD, heareth us: he that is not " GOD, heareth not us: hereby know we the ſp " of truth, and the ſpirit of error." This ſeems firſt ſight to be a very odd rule, and what every fa teacher, and every ſect may lay down in favour themſelves; " he that knoweth GOD, heareth u " he that knoweth not GOD, heareth not us;" a nothing can make it reaſonable, but the conſiderati that the chriſtian religion being already ſo abunda ly confirmed beyond contradiction, is itſelf becom rule to try ſpirits or miracles by. Or,

3. The miracles which falſe prophets work preſently confuted, and upon the ſpot. Thus Mo confuted and conquered Pharaoh's magicians, working miracles which they could not work, whi forced them to yield the cauſe, and acknowled that it was " the finger of GOD." And ſo likew Simon Magus, who had gained ſo great a reputati among the people by his ſorceries, as to be call " the mighty power of GOD," was confuted by apoſtles, who by the laying on of hands conferre miraculous power on men, which he not being able do, would have purchaſed it with money. And Elymas the ſorcerer was ſtruck blind by St. Paul. A the miracles of the heathen temples and oracles, up the preaching of the goſpel, ceaſed, as being aſham of themſelves; as Porphyry, one of the bitter enemies of chriſtianity, does expreſly acknowled Or elſe,

Laſtly, the miracles wrought, or pretended to wrought to confirm falſe doctrines, are ſuch as ſome way or other confute themſelves; or if th be real, are ſufficiently detected to be the pranks the devil, and not the great and glorious works

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God. Such were the miracles of the heathen dei- SERM. CCXXIX.
ties, wrought ſo privately and obſcurely, and confeſſedly mixed with ſo much of impoſture, as to bring a juſt ſuſpicion upon them, that when they were real, the devil was the author of them. And ſuch were the miracles which are attributed to Mahomet; either groſly abſurd and ridiculous, as that of part of the moon coming down into his ſleeve, and his remanding it to it's place again; or elſe deſtitute of all proof and witneſs, as that of a camel's ſpeaking to him by night, and his pigeon whiſpering to him in the ear; which if it had been intended for a miracle, the pigeon ſhould not have whiſpered, but have ſpoken out, that others might have heard it. But Mahomet was ſo concious to himſelf of his own defect in point of miracles, that he laid no weight upon them; "being," as he ſaid, "not ſent to con-"vert the world by miracles; but to conquer them "by force of arms."

And now I am ſorry I have occaſion to ſay it, but it is too true, that the miracles pretended to by the church of Rome, for the confirmation of their erroneous doctrines, are of the ſame ſtamp with theſe, taxed by ſeveral of their beſt writers of impoſture and forgery, of fable and romance, ſo extravagant, and freakiſh, and fantaſtical, wrought without any neceſſity, and ſerving to no wiſe end, that they are ſo far from giving credit to their doctrines, that they are a mighty ſcandal to them, and to our common chriſtianity: whereas the truly divine miracles, reported to us in ſcripture, how unlike are they to theſe? how venerable in themſelves, and in all the circumſtances with which they are related? never wrought but upon great neceſſity, and for excellent ends, full of benefit and advantage, of mercy and compaſſion

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to mankind: and, in a word, ſuch as are every w worthy of their author, having plain characters of t divine wiſdom and goodneſs ſtampt upon them.

And thus I have done with the firſt thing I pr pounded to ſpeak to, namely, that miracles are divine teſtimony; and in what circumſtances, a with what cautions and limitations they are ſo. ſhall at preſent only draw ſome inferences from wh hath been diſcourſed upon this argument.

1. What hath been ſaid may ſatisfy us of the tru and divinity of the chriſtian doctrine, which had eminent a teſtimony given to it from heaven, and d at firſt ſo ſtrangely prevail in the world, contrary all human probability, "not by might, nor " power; but by the Spirit of the LORD." N man can ſuppoſe a religion in circumſtances of great diſadvantage, and upon all human accounts me unlikely to ſuſtain and bear up itſelf, than chriſtiani was. The firſt appearance of it was ſo weak, i beginnings ſo ſmall, and the inſtruments employ in the propagation of it ſo mean and deſpicable, th no man but would have concluded it muſt preſen have ſunk and come to nought; and no other reaſ can be given of the ſtrange ſucceſs and prevailency it, but that "it was of GOD," and therefore " " could not be overthrown."

2. From hence we may judge how groundleſs t pretences are, which men now-a-days make to inſp ration and infallibility; becauſe this is not to proved and made out any other way but by miracl For either we muſt believe every pretence of th kind; and then we are at the mercy of every craf and confident man, to be led by him into what deli ſions he pleaſes: or we muſt only believe thoſe wh give ſome teſtimony of their inſpiration: but the ev

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dence of inſpiration was always miracles. This is the teſtimony which GOD hath always given to thoſe whom he hath ſent upon an extraordinary meſſage to mankind. And this is that which we reaſonably demand of our modern enthuſiaſts, and of the great pretender to infallibility, the biſhop of Rome; becauſe nothing can be more vain, than for men to pretend to inſpiration and an infallible ſpirit, without miracles. And yet I cannot learn that the popes themſelves, among all their boundleſs privileges and powers, do ſo much as pretend to a power of miracles, which yet is the only thing that can in reaſon ſupport their pretences to infallibility. SERM. CCXXIX.

9. You ſee what an immediate teſtimony from heaven GOD was pleaſed to give to the firſt preachers of the chriſtian doctrine, to qualify them, with any probability of ſucceſs, to conteſt with the violent and almoſt invincible prejudices of men educated in a contrary religion, and which had the ſecular authority and laws on its ſide. For having this divine ſeal given to their commiſſion, they did as it were carry the letters patents of heaven in their hands, and an authority paramount to that of human laws. And therefore the wiſdom of GOD, which does nothing which is ſuperfluous and unneceſſary, did not think the apoſtles ſufficiently armed and appointed for this deſign by a commiſſion from the mouth of the Son of GOD, without this divine ſeal and teſtimony of miracles, as a viſible evidence of their divine commiſſion. And therefore our SAVIOUR, after he had commiſſioned them "to preach the goſpel to all nations," commanded them not to enter upon this work, nor "to depart from Jeruſalem, till they had received "the promiſe of the Father;" that is, the miraculous gifts of the holy Ghoſt, Acts i. 4. And ſo our

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SAVIOUR explains it, Luke xxiv. 47. where after he had commanded, that "repentance and remiſſion "of ſins ſhould be preached in his name among all "nations, beginning at Jeruſalem," he adds, ver. 49. "and behold I ſend the promiſe of my Father "upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jeruſalem, "until ye be endued with power from on high." And to the ſame purpoſe, Acts i. 8. "But ye ſhall "receive power, after that the holy Ghoſt is come "upon you;" by which, he tells us, they were qualified to be "witneſſes unto him, both in Jeru-"ſalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and un-"to the uttermoſt parts of the earth."

4. and laſtly, the conſideration of what hath been ſaid, doth juſtly upbraid us, that our religion, which hath ſuch evident marks of divinity upon it, and comes down to us confirmed by ſo many miracles, ſhould yet have ſo little efficacy upon the lives of the greateſt part of thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians. It is true, miracles are now ceaſed among Chriſtians, our religion being ſufficiently eſtabliſhed by thoſe that were wrought at firſt; and now the greateſt miracle in theſe latter ages is a good man, a true and ſincere Chriſtian: but the laws of Chriſtianity are ſtill the ſame; and the motives and arguments to a good life are the ſame; and though the miraculous gifts of the Spirit have left the world, yet the ſealing and ſanctifying gifts of the holy Ghoſt do ſtill remain. We cannot now ſpeak all languages, as the apoſtles did: but we may do that which is much better and more pleaſing to GOD; we may live holy and virtuous lives. We have not that faith which works by miracles; but we may have that which is far more excellent, the "faith which works by cha-"rity;" which, if we believe St. Paul, is more than

than "to ſpeak with the tongues of men and an- SERM. CCXXIX.
"gels," more than "to propheſy, and to under-
"ſtand all myſteries, and all knowledge."

The admirable piety and virtue of the firſt Chriſtians are ſtill upon record for our imitation, but, I know not how it comes to paſs, we chuſe rather lazily to admire thoſe patterns, than vigorouſly to imitate them; as if the holineſs of thoſe times were alſo miraculous, and not intended for the imitation of ſucceeding ages; as if it were impoſſible for us now to lead ſuch lives as they did; as if heaven and earth, GOD and men, and all things were altered ſince that time; as if the chriſtian religion were now quite diſpirited, and had loſt all it's vigour and force; and as if the holy Spirit of GOD had to all intents and purpoſes forſaken the world, and were retired to the Father.

But our religion is ſtill the ſame it was; the precepts of it as reaſonable, and the promiſes of it as powerful as ever. GOD is ſtill the ſame he was; and CHRIST ſtill "at the right-hand of GOD mak-
"ing interceſſion for us;" and the holy Spirit of GOD ſtill ready to aſſiſt us, "to every good word
"and work."

To conclude, we have beyond compariſon the beſt and moſt reaſonable religion in the world; a religion which carries along with it the greateſt evidence of it's truth, which contains the beſt rules and directions for a good life, which offers the moſt powerful aſſiſtance to the obedience of it's laws, and gives the greateſt encouragements thereto, by the aſſurance of a bleſſed immortality in another world. Now the better our religion is, our caſe is ſo much the worſe, if we be not made good by it. Philoſophy had ſome effect upon the world, to make

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ſome men temperate and chaſt, and juſt and honeſt in their lives. And the jewiſh religion (as weak and imperfect as it was, and though it was but "the "ſhadow of good things to come,") hath yet left us many eminent examples of good and holy men. What then ſhall become of us, if the beſt inſtitution in the world, the bleſſed goſpel of the Son of God, have leſs effect upon us, than the doctrine of Pythagoras, and the law of Moſes had upon them? "How "ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation, "which at firſt began to be ſpoken by the LORD, "and was confirmed unto us by them that heard "him? GOD alſo bearing them witneſs, with ſigns "and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts "of the holy Ghoſt, according to his own will. "To which bleſſed and glorious Trinity be all ho-"nour and glory, now and for ever."

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SERMON CCXXX.

Of the miracles wrought in confirmation of chriſtianity.

HEB. ii. 4.

GOD *alſo bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the holy Ghoſt, according to his own will.*

I HAVE begun to diſcourſe upon theſe words, from which, I told you, three things offer themſelves to our conſideration. SERM. CCXXX. The ſecond ſermon on this text.

Firſt, that miracles are a divine teſtimony to a perſon or doctrine. GOD is here ſaid to "bear witneſs to the apoſtles by ſigns, and wonders, and miracles."

Secondly, that GOD gave this teſtimony to the apoſtles and firſt publiſhers of the goſpel, in a very eminent manner: for ſo the phraſe ſignifies, "GOD bearing them witneſs with ſigns, and wonders, and miracles;" ſo many words to the ſame ſenſe being purpoſely uſed to ſignify the greatneſs of the thing.

Thirdly, the reaſon why miracles are now ceaſed in the church, and have been for ſeveral ages; ſo that there have been no footſteps of this miraculous power for ſeveral ages paſt.

The firſt I have ſpoken to, and proceed now to the

Second thing which I propoſed to conſider, viz. that GOD gave teſtimony to the apoſtles and firſt

SERM. CCXXX. publiſhers of chriſtianity, in a very eminent manner; for ſo the expreſſion in the text ſignifies, where ſo many ſeveral words are uſed for the ſame thing, to expreſs, according to the manner of the Hebrew phraſe, the greatneſs of the thing; "GOD bearing "them witneſs both with ſigns, and wonders, and "divers miracles, and gifts of the holy Ghoſt," that is, with many and great miracles, καὶ μερισμοῖς, "and diſtributions of the holy Ghoſt, according to "his own will;" that is, GOD diſtributed theſe ſeveral miraculous powers and gifts among the apoſtles and firſt preachers of the goſpel; not all to every one of them, but ſome to one, and ſome to another, as to him ſeemed beſt, and was moſt for the benefit and edification of the church.

The hiſtory of it in ſhort is this. When our bleſſed SAVIOUR aſcended into heaven, he promiſed to ſend down his Spirit in miraculous gifts upon his apoſtles, to give credit to his doctrine, and to qualify them for the more ſpeedy planting and propagating of it in the world; and accordingly, not many days after he was aſcended into heaven, as an evidence of the power and glory he was inveſted withal, he, according to his promiſe immediately before his aſcenſion, ſent down the holy Ghoſt upon the apoſtles in a viſible manner, that is, in the form of fiery cloven tongues, as an emblem of one of the principal gifts they were endowed withal, viz. the knowledge and ability of ſpeaking ſeveral languages, which they had never learned. And this happened upon the day of Pentecoſt, that ſo the goſpel might exactly correſpond to the diſpenſation of the law, which was the type and figure of it. And therefore as our SAVIOUR died at the time of the jewiſh paſſover, which was the type of his ſufferings; ſo the goſpel, which

hich was the perfection and fulfilling of the law, egan to be publiſhed at the very ſame time that the w was given from mount Sinai, viz. at the end of ıe ſeven weeks after the paſſover. For at this time ıe holy Ghoſt deſcended upon the apoſtles in mira- ulous powers and gifts; when this new law was "to come forth out of Sion, and the law of the LORD from Jeruſalem."

And among theſe gifts, the firſt we find mention- d was the gift of tongues; without which, the goſ- el muſt of neceſſity have been very ſlowly propagat- d in the world: for had the apoſtles been firſt to :arn the ſeveral languages of the nations they were o preach to, how tedious a work would that have een? it requiring the induſtry of ſome years, to gain o perfect a maſtery of a ſtrange language, as to be ble to uſe it with that freedom and readineſs which is eceſſary for ſuch a work.

And this gift all the apoſtles had, becauſe they ıad all occaſion for it, being deſigned by our SA- IOUR to be the chief publiſhers of his goſpel to the vorld. And this gift did alſo continually reſide up- ın them, and not only at ſome times, as ſome other ifts did, becauſe they had conſtant uſe of this gift of tongues.

The interpreting of things ſpoken in a ſtrange ongue was alſo a gift diſtinct from the gift of ongues, though attending it; inſomuch that ſome erſons had one, and ſome the other. So the apo- tle tells us, 1 Cor. xii. 10. "To one is given di- vers kinds of tongues; and to another the inter- pretation of tongues." The occaſion of which was plainly this; it might happen, and often did, hat the auditory might conſiſt of people of ſeveral nations:

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nations; now becauſe no man could ſpeak more than one language at once, it was convenient others ſhould have the gift of interpreting what was ſpoken, to thoſe who underſtood not the language in which it was ſpoken, that ſo all might receive the benefit of what was delivered, and be edified thereby. So that here were two ſeveral gifts ſerving the ſame end, viz. the conveying of the knowledge of the goſpel to mankind, in a more ſpeedy way than it could have been done by ordinary means; and theſe were very plain and ſenſible miracles, unqueſtionably ſupernatural, and evident to the ſenſes of all men. So that the goſpel wherever it was preached, carried it's own teſtimony along with it, and was confirmed by the very manner of it's conveyance and delivery: and well might men entertain it as a divine doctrine, when the very manner and the means whereby it was publiſhed was a miracle.

And here I cannot but take notice, how contrary the arts and the ways of the church of Rome are to the methods of GOD; and that when he was at the expence of ſo many miracles to publiſh this doctrine to the world, they ſhould uſe ſo much induſtry and violence to conceal it. GOD was pleaſed to endow the firſt preachers of it with the gift of tongues, that "their ſound might go into all the earth, and their "word to the end of the world," that there might be no nation nor language where this ſaving knowledge might not come, that the ſermons which they preached, and the prayers which they put up to GOD in public, for themſelves and the people, and all the offices of religion which they performed, might be fully underſtood by all, and that all might join in them, and have the benefit and comfort of them;

them; that their underſtandings might be informed and enlightened by what was ſpoken, and their affections raiſed and warmed by their underſtandings, and their wills excited by their affections; and that the effect of all this might appear in their lives and practice. Thus it was in the primitive chriſtian church: but in the church of Rome, things are managed in a quite contrary way, and have been for ſeveral ages. The doctrine of ſalvation, as it is contained and delivered in the holy ſcripture, is "a ſealed book," which the people are not thought "worthy to open or look into." This "bread "of life which came down from heaven," is like the ſhew-bread among the Jews, "which none may eat "but the prieſt only," unleſs it be by extraordinary favour, and particular licenſe from the biſhop. The people indeed come together, and are preſent at the prayers and devotion of the prieſt, but the prieſt that "prays is a barbarian to them," and all the while "the underſtanding of the people is unfruitful, and "they cannot ſay amen, becauſe they underſtand not "what he ſays." SERM. CCXXX.

But let any man ſhew me the leaſt intimation in ſcripture or antiquity, that our SAVIOUR, or his apoſtles, or the primitive church, ever uſed this way; and yet the danger of error and hereſy was as great then as it is now. So that the church of Rome muſt pretend themſelves wiſer than our SAVIOUR and his apoſtles; and to be more careful to prevent hereſy in the church, than they were. This they are loth to ſay; and yet they muſt ſay it, if they will juſtify their own doings. But the plain truth is, there is another and truer reaſon for it, though they are not willing to own it, and that is this, if the ſcriptures

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were permitted to the people in a language which they underſtood, the errors of their church would be diſcovered and laid open, and men would plainly diſcern how contrary many of their doctrines and practices are to thoſe of our SAVIOUR and his apoſtles: for "every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, leſt his deeds ſhould be "diſcovered."

Secondly, the next miraculous gift I ſhall mention after the gift of tongues, is the gift of prophecy, or foretelling things future, which was always looked upon as an evidence of inſpiration. And this we find mentioned, 1 Cor. xii. 10. "To another "prophecy;" and in ſeveral other places; and to this gift the apoſtle gives a great pre-eminence, 1 Cor. xiv. 1. "Covet ſpiritual gifts: but rather "that ye may prophecy;" becauſe foretelling of things to come was always eſteemed by mankind an evidence of a perſon divinely inſpired, and conſequently was one of the greateſt teſtimonies of the truth of chriſtianity. And this the angel that appeared to St. John particularly takes notice of, Rev. xix. 10. "The teſtimony of JESUS is the ſpirit of prophecy." The prophecies of that book were to be a ſtanding teſtimony of the truth of chriſtianity in all ages of the church.

Thirdly, the next gift is that of healing all manner of diſeaſes. And this the apoſtles ſeem generally to have had, and the elders of the church alſo, whoſe peculiar office it was to pray over the ſick, and to anoint them with oil; and upon their prayers, GOD was pleaſed to grant miraculous recoveries, as we find expreſly promiſed, Jam. v. 14, 15. "Is any "ſick among you, let him call for the elders of the "church,

" church, and let them pray over him, anointing SERM. CCXXX.
" him with oil in the name of the LORD: and the
" prayer of faith ſhall ſave the ſick, and the LORD
" ſhall raiſe him up."

This miraculous power we find likewiſe mentioned to be conferred on the apoſtles in our SAVIOUR's life-time, when he firſt gave them commiſſion to preach the goſpel to the Jews, Mark vi. 12, 13. where it is ſaid, that " they went out, and preached " that men ſhould repent. And they caſt out many " devils, and anointed with oil many that were ſick, " and healed them."

And now that this miraculous gift is ceaſed, there is no reaſon why the mere ceremony of " anointing " with oil" ſhould continue; which yet is ſtill uſed in the church of Rome, and made a ſacrament; though it ſignify nothing: for they do not pretend to heal men by it; nay they pretend the contrary, becauſe they never uſe it, but in extremity, and where they look upon the perſon as paſt recovery; and if they did not think ſo, they would not uſe it.

But beſides the healing, with this ſolemnity of anointing with oil and with prayer, which ſeems to have been uſed by the elders of the church only upon thoſe who were members of the church; there was likewiſe a general gift of healing, which the apoſtles exerciſed upon all occaſions wherever they came; and this was performed only by laying their hands on the ſick. And this we find promiſed by our SAVIOUR to his apoſtles, when he gave them commiſſion to preach the goſpel to all the world, immediately before his aſcenſion; and not only to the apoſtles, but to thoſe who ſhould believe upon their preaching, Mark xvi. 17, 18. " Theſe ſigns

" ſhall

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" ſhall follow them that believe: in my name ſhall " they caſt out devils," &c. And then it follows, " they ſhall lay hands on the ſick, and they ſhall re- " cover."

Fourthly, the power of raiſing the dead, which hath always been eſteemed one of the greateſt and moſt unqueſtionable miracles of all other. A principal part of the apoſtles office was " to be witneſſes " of our SAVIOUR's reſurrection from the dead, " whereby he was ſo powerfully demonſtrated to be " the Son of GOD." But becauſe this was a ſtrange relation, and not eaſy to be credited by thoſe who were ſtrangers to the apoſtles, and had never known them before; therefore that they might witneſs this with more authority, GOD was pleaſed to endow them with a miraculous power of all kinds; and particularly with a power of raiſing the dead: and then there was no difficulty in receiving their teſtimony concerning our SAVIOUR's reſurrection, when men ſaw them in his name raiſe others from the dead. And of this we have two inſtances in the acts of the apoſtles, and of St. Peter's raiſing Dorcas, Acts ix. and St. Paul's raiſing Eutychus, Acts xx. And Ireneus, who lived in the age after the apoſtles, tells us, that in his time this power continued among Chriſtians.

Fifthly, another miraculous gift was that of diſcerning ſpirits; the principal uſe of which was to try and judge who were true prophets. And of this the apoſtle ſpeaks, 1 Cor. xiv. 29. " Let the prophets " ſpeak two or three, and let the other judge." And ver. 32. " the ſpirits of the prophets are ſub- " ject to the prophets." And this is likewiſe called by the ſame apoſtle, " the gift of diſcerning ſpi- " rits."

"rits." 1. Cor. xii. 10. "To another is given the "diſcerning of ſpirits." Thoſe who pretended to this gift, were tried by the biſhops and elders of the church, as the prophets were tried among the Jews by the Sanhedrim. And of theſe kinds of aſſemblies among the Chriſtians, for the trial of prophets, Euſebius ſpeaks particularly in his fifth book. A.M. CCCXX.

And it ſhould ſeem likewiſe that this gift of diſcerning ſpirits extended alſo to the diſcovery of the ſecrets of men's hearts; by the revealing whereof, unbelievers were many times ſuddenly ſtruck and convinced; as may very probably be collected from 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. "But if all propheſy, and there "come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned; he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: "And thus are the ſecrets of our heart made mani"feſt, and ſo falling down on his face, he will wor"ſhip GOD, and report that GOD is in you of a "truth."

And upon this miraculous gift of knowing the ſecrets of men's hearts, it ſeems to be very probable, that that which is commonly called "the power of "the keys", did depend, I mean "the power of "remitting or retaining ſins:" for they who had the privilege of knowing men's hearts, might do this upon certain grounds, and were ſecured from miſtake in the exerciſe of their power upon particular perſons; which the prieſts and miniſters of the church now are not, nor can be; becauſe they cannot ſee into men's hearts, whether they be truly penitent and qualified for forgiveneſs, or not. For I cannot eaſily believe but that thoſe words of our SAVIOUR, "whoſe ſins ye remit, they are remit"ted; and whoſe ſins ye retain, they are retained,"

were

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were intended to ſignify ſomething more than a mere declaration of the promiſes and threatnings of the goſpel, which any man might make, as well as the apoſtles and miniſters of the church. For that God will forgive the penitent, and that he will not pardon the ſinner, except he repent, is as true from any man's mouth, as from an apoſtle's: and as to the abſolution of this or that particular perſon, though a miniſter, by the ſkill and knowledge of his profeſſion, is ordinarily and reaſonably preſumed, by virtue of his office, to be a better judge of a man's repentance than other perſons are, and therefore may with more authority and ſatisfaction to the penitent, declare his judgment and opinion concerning him; yet not being able to ſee into his heart, he may be miſtaken concerning him; and if he be, his declaring his ſins to be forgiven, that is, his abſolution of him, will do him no good: and on the other hand, his refuſal to abſolve him, if he be truly penitent, will do him no harm. As the judgment of a ſkilful lawyer is of greater authority and more ſatisfactory to us, concerning our title to an eſtate, than the opinion of another man, who is not of the profeſſion nor preſumed to have the like ſkill: but yet for all this, his judgment does not alter the caſe; and if in truth the law be otherwiſe, our title is bad, for all this ſkilful man's opinion of the goodneſs of it.

And thus much is granted by the church of Rome, that if the prieſt be miſtaken in the uſe of the keys, and gives abſolution to one that is not truly penitent, his ſins are not remitted; or if a perſon be excommunicated that is not truly guilty, his ſins are not retained; what "he binds on earth, is not bound "in heaven; and he whom he looſeth and abſolves

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"on earth, is not abſolved in heaven." But the Proteſtants go farther, and do not only make a miſtaken abſolution or excommunication void in itſelf, but they do not make the abſolution of the prieſt at all neceſſary to the forgiveneſs of ſins, but only convenient for the ſatisfaction and comfort of the penitent. For which reaſon, our church does not require a formal abſolution to be given to the dying penitent, unleſs he himſelf deſire it; which is a certain argument, that in the judgment of our church, the abſolution of the prieſt is not neceſſary to the forgiveneſs and ſalvation of the penitent. For had they thought it neceſſary, they would have enjoined the prieſt to give it to every one whom he judged penitent, whether he deſired it or not. SERM. CCXXX.

So that the abſolution of the prieſt, having only the authority of a man, preſumed to be ſkilful in his office, but no certain effect, in caſe he be miſtaken (as he very eaſily may be, and if he be, as he ought to be, a charitable man, no doubt often is) I cannot think but that this power of "remitting and retaining ſins," ſo ſolemnly conferred on the apoſtles by our SAVIOUR, had ſomething in it that was miraculous and extraordinary, and did ſuppoſe the knowledge of men's hearts, and that they were not miſtaken in the application of this power to particular perſons; and conſequently, that in that miraculous and extraordinary degree, it was peculiar to the apoſtles and their times. For I cannot eaſily be brought to believe, that the meaning of this great promiſe to the apoſtles ſhould be only this, "Verily, verily I ſay into you, whatſoever ye ſhall bind "on earth," if ye be not miſtaken, as in many caſes ye will be, and in any caſe ye may be, "ſhall be

SERM. CCXXX. "bound in heaven: and whatſoever ye ſhall looſe on "earth, ſhall be looſed in heaven." And if more be meant than this, it muſt ſuppoſe a miraculous power of diſcerning the ſincerity of men's hearts.

And therefore when the power of the keys is conferred on the miniſters of the goſpel, in our form of ordination, I ſuppoſe that only one or both of theſe two things is intended by it, viz. a power to admit perſons into the chriſtian church by baptiſm, in which is ſealed to them the remiſſion of ſins; and to caſt perſons out of the communion of the chriſtian church, by excommunication and the cenſures of it: and an authority, by virtue of their office, to declare to men the terms of pardon and forgiveneſs, which cannot be that infallible power of abſolving, which the apoſtles had.

And I am the rather induced to think ſo, becauſe I find it promiſed to the apoſtles, together with the miraculous power and efficacy of prayer, which St. Chryſoſtom reckons among the miraculous gifts, which he ſays were ceaſed in his time. That it was thus promiſed, you may ſee Matt. xviii. 18, 19. "Verily I ſay unto you, whatſoever ye ſhall bind "on earth, ſhall be bound in heaven: and whatſo-"ever ye ſhall looſe on earth, ſhall be looſed in hea-"ven. Again I ſay unto you, that if two of you "ſhall agree on earth, as touching any thing that "they ſhall aſk, it ſhall be done for them of my Fa-"ther which is in heaven." But ſurely no man will pretend that any two Chriſtians or miniſters have now this power, that whatever they ſhall agree together to aſk of GOD, which is fit and lawful in behalf of any perſon, GOD will certainly grant it upon their requeſt. In the ſame ſenſe I underſtand ſeveral

ral other texts, concerning the efficacy of the prayers of the apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians, as in a great meaſure miraculous, and peculiar to the firſt times of chriſtianity. And I think any man that attentively conſiders them, will think that they cannot well be underſtood otherwiſe. Such as theſe, Matt. xxi. 22. "And all things whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in "prayer, believing, ye ſhall receive." Mark xi. 24. "I ſay unto you, what things ſoever ye deſire "when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and "ye ſhall have them." John xiv. 14. "If ye "ſhall aſk any thing in my name, I will do it." "And chap. xv. 17. "If ye abide in me, and my "words abide in you, ye ſhall aſk what ye will, "and it ſhall be done unto you." 1 John iii. 22. "And whatſoever we aſk, we receive of him;" and chap. v. 14, 15. "And this is the confidence which "we have in him, that if we aſk any thing, accord-"ing to his will, he heareth us. And if we know "that he hear us, whatſoever we aſk, we know "that we have the petitions that we deſired of him." Theſe promiſes I take to contain ſomething extraordinary, and peculiar to the firſt times of chriſtianity. And this will appear exceeding probable, if we conſider the occaſion and circumſtances of theſe promiſes, which are ſo often joined with the promiſe of a miraculous power, as in the place I mentioned before, Matt. xviii. 18, 19. where after the power of binding and looſing, it immediately follows, that "if "two of you ſhall agree on earth touching any thing "they ſhall aſk, it ſhall be done for them of my "Father which is in heaven." Matt. xxi. 22. and Mark xi. 23. ſays our SAVIOUR there to his diſciples, "Have faith in GOD; for verily I ſay un-

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" to you, whoſoever ſhall ſay to this mountain, " Be thou removed, and be thou caſt into the ſea, " and ſhall not doubt in his heart, but ſhall believe " that thoſe things which he ſaith ſhall come to " paſs, he ſhall have whatſoever he ſaith." And then immediately it follows, " Therefore I ſay un- " to you, whatſoever things ye deſire when ye pray, " believe that ye ſhall receive them, and ye ſhall " have them;" that is, whatever ye deſire of God to do, he ſhall miraculouſly do it, upon your prayers. So likewiſe, John xiv. 12, 13, 14. " Verily, verily " I ſay unto you, he that believeth on me, the " works that I do ſhall he do alſo; and greater " works than theſe ſhall he do, becauſe I go unto " my Father. And whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in my " name, that will I do, that the Father may be glo- " rified in the Son. If ye ſhall aſk any thing in my " name, I will do it." Still you ſee this extraordinary efficacy of prayer is joined with the power of miracles, as one part and branch of it. More particularly, we find the forgiveneſs of the ſins of thoſe whom they prayed for, expreſly promiſed. 1 John v. 15. " And if we know that he heareth us, what- " ſoever we aſk, we know that we have the petitions " that we deſired of him." And then it follows; " If any man ſee his brother ſin a ſin, which is not " unto death, he ſhall aſk, and he ſhall give him " life for the ſin that is not unto death." Where forgiveneſs of ſins, upon the prayers of Chriſtians for one another, is promiſed, except in the caſe of " a ſin unto death," by which is meant apoſtaſy from chriſtianity to the heathen idolatry, which is the reaſon of the caution which follows; " Little " children keep your ſelves from idols." And

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this extraordinary efficacy of prayer, we find promiſed in a more eſpecial manner to the elders of the church, Jam. v. 14, 15. "Is any ſick among you? "let him call for the elders of the church, and let "them pray over him, anointing him with oil in "the name of the LORD: and the prayer of faith "ſhall ſave the ſick, and the LORD ſhall raiſe him "up: and if he have committed ſins, they ſhall be "forgiven him." SERM. CCXXX.

In comparing of all theſe texts, it ſeems plain, that both the power of remitting and retaining ſins, and the ſtrange efficacy of prayer, which were promiſed to the apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians, had ſomething miraculous and extraordinary in them, and were peculiar to the firſt ages of the church. I will not be peremptory in theſe things, but this ſeems to be the moſt genuine and reaſonable interpretation of theſe texts.

Sixthly, and beſides theſe which I have mentioned, there was likewiſe a power of inflicting corporal puniſhments and diſeaſes upon ſcandalous and obſtinate Chriſtians; which in ſcripture is called "a de"livering men up to Satan, for the deſtroying, or "tormenting of their bodies, that their ſouls might "be ſaved at laſt." And of this kind were thoſe diſeaſes which befel the Corinthians, for their diſorderly and irregular carriage at the ſacrament, of which the apoſtle ſpeaks, 1 Cor. xi. 30. "For this "cauſe many are weak and ſickly among you, "and many ſleep;" that is, to ſome of them theſe diſtempers proved mortal. And we find that this power did in ſome caſes extend to the inflicting of ſudden and preſent death; as in the caſe of Ananias and Sapphira. And indeed, conſidering that chri-

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ſtianity was at firſt deſtitute of any countenance from the civil power, ſome ſuch power as this was neceſſary, to maintain the authority of the apoſtles againſt the contumacious and diſobedient.

And then, laſtly, there was the power of caſting out devils in the name of CHRIST, which was common to the meaneſt Chriſtian, and continued in the church a long time after moſt of the other gifts were ceaſed; as Tertullian, Minutius Felix, and Arnobius do moſt expreſly teſtify concerning their times.

Thus you ſee that there were almoſt all imaginable kinds of miraculous powers conferred upon the apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians, to give the greater eſtabliſhment and confirmation to the chriſtian doctrine.

All the reflection I ſhall make upon what hath been ſaid ſhall be this. Since our religion comes down to us confirmed by ſuch miraculours powers, "we ought to take the more earneſt heed to it," to believe it more ſtedfaſtly, and to practiſe it more carefully in our lives. "For if the word ſpo-"ken by angels was ſtedfaſt, and every tranſgreſſion "and diſobedience received a juſt recompence of "reward; how ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo "great ſalvation?"

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SERMON CCXXXI.

Of the miracles wrought in confirmation of chriſtianity.

HEB. ii. 4.

GOD *alſo bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the holy Ghoſt, according to his own will.*

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IN theſe words three things offer themſelves to our conſideration.

Firſt, that miracles are a divine teſtimony given to a perſon or doctrine.

Secondly, that GOD gave this teſtimony to the apoſtles and firſt publiſhers of the goſpel, in a very eminent manner.

Of theſe two I have diſcourſed at large, and now proceed to the

Third and laſt thing which I propoſed, viz. the reaſon why theſe miracles are now ceaſed in the chriſtian church, and have been for a long time; ſo that there have been no footſteps of this miraculous power for many ages.

And in the handling of this argument, I ſhall do theſe three things.

I. Shew that theſe miraculous gifts and powers have ceaſed in the chriſtian church for ſeveral ages.

II. I ſhall aſſign a plain reaſon of the ceaſing of miracles after ſuch a time.

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III. Anſwer the objection from the innumerable miracles, which have been, and are ſtill pretended to be wrought in the church of Rome.

I. I ſhall ſhew, that theſe miraculous powers and gifts have ceaſed in the church for ſeveral ages. That they are now ceaſed, we find by certain experience; nor are they pretended to at this day by any part of the chriſtian church, except the church of Rome, where yet they are nothing ſo plentiful now-a-days as they were in thoſe ignorant ages, from the time of the degeneracy and corruption of the weſtern church down to the reformation; and now chiefly pretended to in thoſe parts of the Roman communion where their religion reigns without any contradiction, and the people are under the awe and laſh of the inquiſition, ſo that they dare neither gainſay, nor offer to detect the forgery and impoſture of them; and yet here is leſs need of them, becauſe the people are all of a mind, and believe as the church would have them, and dare not for their lives do otherwiſe. For where the inquiſition rules, and ignorance, the mother, not of true devotion, but of credulity and ſuperſtition, is carefully preſerved, there is no need of miracles, to make people believe what they have a mind to: but in other places, where their religion is oppoſed, and there is great occaſion for them, both to confirm thoſe of their own religion, and to reduce heretics and unbelievers, there is little or no pretence to them, as I ſhall ſhew by and by.

So that all over the chriſtian church, except in the church of Rome, all pretence to theſe miraculous powers and gifts is now ceaſed, and hath been for many ages. St. Chryſoſtom ſpeaking of his time, which

which was about 400 years after CHRIST, ſays that theſe miraculous powers were then ceaſed, and ſpeaks as if no footſteps of them were left in the paſtors and governors of the church, much leſs among private Chriſtians; for which he gives us this ſubſtantial reaſon (which I ſhall ſpeak to afterwards) that chriſtianity being now already eſtabliſhed by miracles, there was no reaſon to expect the continuance of them. St. Auguſtin indeed, ſome time after, ſpeaks of many miraculous things done at ſepulchres of the martyrs. But this doth not contradict what St. Chryſoſtom had ſaid, becauſe he ſpeaks of the living teachers and members of the church; in whom theſe miraculous gifts and powers were ceaſed: but that the ſame miraculous cures were wrought upon the prayers of Chriſtians, at the tombs of the martyrs, is a confirmation of the thing, that GOD deſigned to honour the primitive Chriſtians and martyrs with theſe gifts, and not to continue them to the ſucceeding ages of the church; and therefore GOD was pleaſed that ſo many wonderful things ſhould be done at their ſepulchres, to ſhew that he did intend, that theſe miraculous powers and gifts ſhould die with them, and continue no longer in the living members of the church. SERM. CCXXXI.

II. I ſhall now aſſign a plain reaſon of the ceaſing of theſe miraculous gifts after ſuch a time; namely, becauſe there was not the like neceſſity and occaſion for them, that there was before. They were at firſt in a great degree neceſſary to introduce the goſpel into the world, which was deſtitute of all other helps and advantages; to recommend it to the eſteem and liking of mankind; to give credit to a new doctrine and religion, ſo contrary to the inveterate prejudices of men, bred up in another religion very different

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ferent from this, and ſo oppoſite to the luſts and intereſts of men; to make way for the more ſpeedy and effectual planting of this religion in the world; to ſtrengthen the hands of the firſt publiſhers of it, and to give credit to their teſtimony, concerning that ſtrange relation of theirs, of the reſurrection of CHRIST from the dead; to be a ſenſible evidence and conviction to men of the divinity of that new doctrine which was preached unto them, and to ſupport and confirm them in the belief and profeſſion of it, againſt thoſe terrible ſufferings and perſecutions, which for the ſake of it they were expoſed to. For theſe reaſons GOD was pleaſed to ſhed abroad ſo plentifully theſe miraculous gifts among the firſt preachers and profeſſors of chriſtianity; and as theſe reaſons ceaſed or abated, ſo did theſe miraculous powers and gifts: and therefore as ſoon as the goſpel was planted, which it was in a great part of the then known world, during the lives of the apoſtles, the gift of tongues ceaſed, and we hear no more of it, becauſe there was no further uſe and occaſion for it. Other gifts did continue longer, but abated by degrees, according as chriſtianity gained ground and eſtabliſhment, and they grew leſs frequent, as there was leſs need of them. The power of caſting out devils, which was common (for every Chriſtian had it) continued longeſt; and there was reaſon it ſhould continue ſo long as the devil reigned, and the pagan idolatry was kept up, to ſhew that the Spirit of CHRIST was ſuperior to the devil, and would finally overcome him and overthrow his kingdom, according to that of St. John, 1 John iv. 4. "Ye are of "GOD, little children, and have overcome them: "becauſe greater is he that is in you, than he that

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" is in the world." And this appeared in that they were able in the name of CHRIST to caſt him out wherever he had taken poſſeſſion, which GOD permitted to be very frequent in thoſe times, for the more glorious manifeſtation of his power, in " caſting out the prince of this world." But when the powers of the world became chriſtian, and the heathen idolatry was every where overthrown, and Satan's kingdom every where deſtroyed, then this miraculous gift alſo ceaſed, there being no farther occaſion for it. And now that " the kingdoms of the " world were become the kingdoms of the LORD, " and of his CHRIST," and that the goſpel was planted, and had taken firm root, and was fully ſettled and eſtabliſhed, theſe miraculous powers, which were at firſt neceſſary to balance the mighty difficulties and oppoſitions which chriſtianity met withal, and to ſupply the want of all manner of countenance from the civil authority, were withdrawn and did ceaſe, becauſe there was no need of their longer continuance. SERM. CCXXXI.

Beſides that it is to be conſidered, that thoſe miraculous powers, which manifeſted themſelves in the firſt ages of chriſtianity, were intended by GOD to give a ſtanding confirmation to it in after ages; as the miracles that were wrought at the giving of the law, and the bringing of the children of Iſrael into Canaan, were deſigned for a ſtanding confirmation of the jewiſh religion, the memory whereof was ſo carefully preſerved and tranſmitted to after ages, that they needed not to be repeated.

I come now, in the

III. and laſt place, to anſwer that objection from the innumerable miracles, which have been, and are ſtill

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ſtill pretended to be wrought in the church of Rome. And ſo indeed we find that the Arians and other heretics in former times pretended to miracles, for the confirmation of their errors, a good while after miracles were generally ceaſed in the chriſtian church, which ſhews that this is no new or ſtrange thing.

In anſwer to this objection, I deſire theſe following particulars may be conſidered.

Firſt, that the moſt learned and judicious writers of the roman church do acknowledge, that there is no neceſſity of miracles now, and that chriſtianity is ſufficiently eſtabliſhed by the miracles which were wrought at firſt to give teſtimony to it; and therefore not being neceſſary, without manifeſt evidence of fact, it is not neceſſary to believe that they are continued.

Secondly, the miracles pretended to by the church of Rome are of very doubtful and ſuſpected credit, even among the wiſeſt perſons of their own communion; and therefore I hope they do not expect we ſhould give much credit to thoſe miracles, of the truth of which they themſelves are in ſo much doubt, that they are generally looked upon by the more prudent and learned among them, as pious frauds, to raiſe and entertain the devotion of the weak and ignorant. Several of them have been convicted of fraud and impoſture, not only here in England, in times of popery, and at the beginning of the reformation; but in other countries, where that religion bears ſway.

And it is obſervable, that the greateſt part of the hiſtory of theſe miracles (which they call legends) were written in the romance age, and much in the ſame ſtyle, with the like wantonneſs and extravagancy

travagancy of fancy, and fulſom abſurdity of inven- SERM.
tion, and it is to be feared with the like regard to CCXXXI.
truth. And I know not whether romances had not their name, as well as their original, from theſe roman legends, of which they are exact copies and imitations; and as theſe were ſacred, ſo thoſe were a ſort of civil legends, in which they repreſented their hero's doing the like abſurd feats and miracles in chivalry, as their ſaints in their legends are ſaid to do in religion; and they were both written by the lazy and unlearned monks, and by them dreſſed up and fitted to the guſt of thoſe ignorant and ſuperſtitious ages.

And yet theſe legends of lying wonders have not only been put into the hands of the people, but leſſons out of them have been taken, as out of the ſcriptures, and diſtributed into the public offices of their church, to be read there, as the ſcriptures are, and inſtead of them; only with this difference, that the people are permitted to have the ſcriptures only in an unknown tongue, but the legends, out of which theſe leſſons are taken, they are permitted to have at home in their own tongue; as if there were no danger of error or hereſy from falſe ſtories, but only from the word of truth. And herein is remarkably fulfilled that prophecy concerning the followers of Antichriſt, 2 Theſſ. ii. 11. that "becauſe they re- "ceived not the truth in the love of it, GOD would "ſend them ſtrong deluſions, ἐνέργειαν πλάνης, the "efficacy of impoſture, that they ſhould believe a "lie." And how could they more ſolemnly declare the belief and love of lies, than by putting theſe ridiculous fables into the public offices of the church in place of the holy ſcriptures? and, at the

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ſame time that they deny to the people the uſe of the ſcriptures in a known tongue, to permit them the uſe, and to recommend to them the reading of theſe lying legends, out of which theſe ridiculous leſſons are taken.

Thirdly, the miracles of the church of Rome, ſuppoſing ſeveral of them to be true, have ſuch marks and characters upon them, as render it very ſuſpicious that they are not operations of GOD, or good ſpirits; but "the working of Satan." If any man have but the patience to rake into theſe dunghills, and to read over theſe legends, even as they have by the later collectors and compilers been purged and reformed, he ſhall find the miracles recited in them to be generally of one ſtamp, very fooliſh and abſurd, frivolous and trifling, wrought without any neceſſity, upon no good occaſion, to no wiſe end and purpoſe; ſo that one may know them by their very countenances to be the tricks and pranks of the devil; and not the great and glorious works of GOD, ſuch as are the miracles recorded in the holy ſcriptures.

Fourthly, the miracles of the church of Rome, taking them for true, are very impertinently and unſeaſonably wrought. When and where there is no need and occaſion for them, they are very rife and frequent: but where there is greateſt occaſion for them, and moſt reaſon to expect them, they are either not at all, or very rarely ſo much as pretended to. In times and places where their religion did moſt abſolutely bear ſway, and few or none durſt oppoſe it; and where the doctrines, which they pretend to confirm by theſe miracles, were moſt generally believed, as in thoſe long dark and ignorant times

times before the reformation, and now in Italy and Spain, where the Inquiſition forceth them all to be of one belief, or profeſs to be ſo; in theſe times and places, where there was leaſt need and occaſion for miracles, then and there did they moſt abound, even more (if we may believe their hiſtories) for ſeveral ages before the reformation, than in the times of our SAVIOUR and his apoſtles. But ſince the reformation, and that many of their doctrines are called in queſtion and diſbelieved, miracles are grown rare, and almoſt ceaſed even in popiſh countries; and they have had but very ill ſucceſs with thoſe few they have pretended to; witneſs the miracle at Angiers in France, of a child appearing over the altar in the time of maſs, to convince all people of the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, with which the Papiſts made ſuch a noiſe here in England, about fourteen or fifteen years ago, and which at laſt was diſcovered to be an artificial juggle and contrivance of ſome cunning prieſt, and publiſhed to the world for a cheat, by the honeſt and worthy biſhop of that place. SERM. CCXXXI.

But where there ſeems to be moſt need of them, they are moſt wanting; as for the converſion of heathens, and the conviction of heretic infidels. For the converſion of heathens, in which caſe, if men did ſincerely deſign the propagation of the true and uncorrupted chriſtianity, I do not ſee why miracles might not yet reaſonably be expected; but yet for all this, we hear of very few miracles, not ſo much as the gift of tongues, even upon this occaſion. In the firſt planting of the Weſt-Indies, we hear of no miracles, except the moſt prodigious cruelties that ever were in the world, to the infinite ſcandal of the chriſtian

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chriſtian name. And in the Eaſt-Indies and China, Xaverius and the firſt miſſionaries ſpeak with no aſſurance of any miracles wrought by them; and ſince that time they have ſo depraved the chriſtian religion there, by concealing a moſt eſſential part of it, the death and ſufferings of our SAVIOUR, as if they were "aſhamed of the croſs of CHRIST," that it is not credible, that GOD ſhould vouchſafe the countenance of miracles to thoſe who, "preach another "goſpel."

And then for the conviction of heretics (as they are pleaſed to call us Proteſtants) one would think miracles (ſince they have that power) would be very proper for that purpoſe to be wrought among them; as now here in England, where they are continually endeavouring (but eſpecially of late with more than uſual vigour and hopes) to reſtore their religion: and yet for all this, we cannot prevail with them to favour us with the ſight of one miracle, in order to our conviction; but if they have any, they keep them private among themſelves, though both reaſon and ſcripture tells us, "that miracles were not in"tended for them that believe; but to convince "them that believe not."

Fifthly, he from whom, of all perſons in that church, we might expect the moſt and greateſt miracles, does not, ſo far as I can learn, pretend at all to that gift; I mean the head of their church, the pope, who both as he is vicar of CHRIST, and ſucceſſor of St. Peter in his full power and office; or if he be not his ſucceſſor, yet as he is his ſhadow, and pretends to be his ſucceſſor, might fairly pretend to a power of miracles above any in that church; and I have often wonder'd why he does not: but it ſeems he

he contents himſelf with infallibility, which is privi- SERM. CCXXXI.
lege and power enough for one man; and indeed if he had it, and could ſatisfy others that he hath it, that would ſerve his turn without miracles: but the miſchief of it is, there is no other external evidence, and which can reaſonably ſatisfy others of any man's inſpiration or infallibility, but miracles; and therefore the pope hath done very unadviſedly, in pretending to one without the other, when he hath the ſame right and title to both, that is, none at all.

Sixthly, moſt of the doctrines in difference between us and the church of Rome, which they chiefly pretend to confirm by theſe miracles, are not capable of being confirmed by them. There are three ſorts of doctrines, two of which are in their own nature incapable of being confirmed by a miracle, and a third, upon ſuppoſition of it's contrariety to the chriſtian doctrine, which hath already had an unqueſtionable divine confirmation.

1. No doctrine, which is contrary to ſenſe, is capable of being confirmed by a miracle; as tranſubſtantiation, which becauſe it neceſſarily requires the renouncing of our ſenſes, in order to the belief of it, for that very reaſon miracles can give no credit to it. For that which depends on the certainty of ſenſe, as miracles certainly do, can be no competent argument to prove that which is contrary to ſenſe, as tranſubſtantiation evidently is.

2. No doctrine, that does countenance or enjoin idolatry, is capable of being confirmed by a miracle. This is evident from Deut. xiii. where Moſes ſuppoſeth that a prophet might work a ſign or a wonder; but if it was to ſeduce them from the worſhip of the true GOD, who is naturally known, to the

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worſhip of idols, in that caſe they were not to hearken to him, notwithſtanding he wrought a miracle: but the church of Rome teacheth idolatry in their worſhip of images, and of the hoſt, and in the invocation of ſaints and angels.

3. No doctrine contrary to any part of the chriſtian doctrine, which hath already received an unqueſtionable divine confirmation, is capable of being confirmed by the miracles pretended to in the church of Rome, if they were real. For I hope they have not the face to pretend their miracles to be equal to thoſe of our SAVIOUR and his apoſtles, either for the certainty, or greatneſs of them; and I have already ſhewn, that they notoriouſly want both the credit and certainty of our SAVIOUR's miracles, and the marks of their divinity.

Now ſeveral of the doctrines of that church are directly contrary to, or inconſiſtent with, the doctrines of chriſtianity. Their endeavour to conceal from people the doctrine of the goſpel, contained in the holy ſcriptures, is a notorious contradiction to the deſign of the goſpel, and to that particular miracle whereby the knowledge of it was conveyed to the world the gift of tongues; and then the ſervice of GOD in an unknown tongue, which is inconſiſtent with true devotion, contrary to edification, and to the plain ſcope and deſign of a whole chapter of St. Paul to the Corinthians. And ſo likewiſe is the communion in one kind, to our SAVIOUR's expreſs inſtitution: and the repetition of CHRIST's ſacrifice, to as expreſs a declaration of the apoſtle to the Hebrews to the contrary, as is poſſible for words to make.

Seventhly,

Seventhly and laſtly, which falls heavieſt upon them of all, the chief prophecies of the new teſtament, which are concerning falſe prophets, and concerning Antichriſt, have marked him out by this character, that he ſhould be a great worker of miracles, and magnify himſelf upon this pretence. Matt. xxiv. 24. "For there ſhall ariſe falſe chriſts, and "falſe prophets, and ſhall ſhew great ſigns and "wonders, inſomuch that (if it were poſſible) they "ſhall deceive the very elect." And, 2 Theſſ. ii. 9, 10. St. Paul foretels there, that in the great degeneracy and falling away of the chriſtian church, "the man of ſin ſhould come after the working of "Satan, with all power, and ſigns, and wonders of "lies," that is either falſe miracles, or miracles wrought to confirm falſe doctrines, and "with all "deceivableneſs of unrighteouſneſs," all the leger-demain and juggling tricks of falſhood and impoſture: and certainly nothing was ever more viſible than theſe are in the church of Rome; whether we conſider their impudent forgeries of writings, (which they have not the face now to deny) or the nature and character of their miracles. So that though Bellarmine is pleaſed to make miracles one of the marks of the true church, yet the miracles of the church of Rome, if we conſider all the circumſtances of them, are one of the plaineſt marks of Antichriſt, and the very brand of the beaſt, as we find him deſcribed, Rev. xiii. 13, 14. "And he doth great "wonders, and deceiveth them that dwell on the "earth, by the means of thoſe miracles which he "had power to do."

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And now the church of Rome may be allowed to work miracles; and yet divine miracles, ſuch as

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were wrought for the firſt confirmation of chriſtianity, may be ceaſed in the church: which is a ſufficient anſwer to the objection, and upon the whole matter ſhews, that the miracles pretended to in the church of Rome are ſo far from giving any confirmation to her doctrines, that they are rather an evident proof that ſhe is the apoſtate and anti-chriſtian church.

I might now draw two or three inferences from this whole diſcourſe. As,

I. We have great reaſon to admire the wiſdom and goodneſs of GOD in the diſpenſation of the goſpel, that by the ſending down of his holy Spirit to endow the firſt publiſhers of this heavenly doctrine with ſuch miraculous gifts and powers, he hath given ſuch abundant teſtimony to the truth of our religion, and ſuch firm grounds for our faith to rely upon.

II. The conſideration of what hath been ſaid convinceth men of the great ſin of infidelity, and the unreaſonableneſs of it, after ſo clear conviction and demonſtration as GOD hath given to the world of the truth of chriſtianity.

III. and laſtly, they who believe the goſpel are utterly inexcuſable, if they do not obey it, and live according to it: for this is the great end of all the miracles, which GOD hath wrought for the confirmation of chriſtianity, that by the belief of the goſpel men might be brought to "the obedience of faith," and live conformably to the precepts of that holy religion, which the Son of GOD by ſo many miracles hath planted and preſerved in the world. But theſe I have diſcourſed of on another occaſion *, and therefore ſhall inſiſt upon them no farther at this time.

* See vol. X., ſerm. CXCII.

SER-

SERMON CCXXXII.

The advantages of truth, in oppoſition to error.

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1 JOHN iv. 4, 5.

Ye are of GOD, *little children, and have overcome them: becauſe greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore ſpeak they of the world, and the world heareth them.*

SERM. CCXXXII. The firſt ſermon on this text.

IN the beginning of this chapter the apoſtle cautions Chriſtians againſt the falſe teachers and falſe prophets, intending more eſpecially thoſe of the Gnoſtic ſect, as is plain from the ſcope of the whole epiſtle, who were ſo buſy to ſeduce Chriſtians to their impious ways, and to tempt them to apoſtatize from the chriſtian religion to the heathen idolatry, for fear of perſecution.

And to encourage them who had hitherto continued in the truth, and reſiſted the ſeducing arts of thoſe falſe prophets, ſtill to perſevere in their holy profeſſion and practice, he tells them what advantages they who have embraced the truth, and lived according to it, have above thoſe who ſeduce men to errors, or are ſeduced by them. "Ye are of "GOD, little children, and have overcome them: "becauſe greater is he that is in you, than he that "is in the world." That which gives truth, and

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the profeſſors of it, the advantage over error and ſeducers is, that truth is from GOD, and the Spirit of GOD dwells in thoſe who ſincerely embrace and obey it.

"Ye are of GOD," that is, ye are taught by him, and inſtructed in the doctrine which is from GOD, and reliſh divine truth, which our SAVIOUR calls "ſavouring the things which are of GOD," in oppoſition to "the things of the world," the luſts and intereſts of the world, which ſway and rule in thoſe falſe prophets and ſeducing ſpirits. For ſo it follows in the next verſe, "they are of the world," they are acted by worldly luſts and intereſts: "therefore "ſpeak they of the world," they teach things ſuitable to their worldly affections and intereſts; "and "the world heareth them," they who are of the ſame temper are ſeduced and led away by them.

So that the apoſtle's deſign in theſe words, is plainly to ſhew the great advantage which truth and the ſincere profeſſors of it have above error and the teachers and diſciples of it.

"Ye are of God." This phraſe is very frequently, and very peculiarly uſed by St. John; it ſignifies to belong to GOD in a ſpecial and peculiar manner, and is the ſame with being "born of GOD," and being "the children of GOD." Chap. iii. 10. "In this the children of GOD are manifeſt, and the "children of the devil: whoſoever doth not righ-"teouſneſs, is not of GOD." Where you ſee, "to "be of GOD," and "to be the children of GOD," are the ſame thing: and ſo "to be the children of "the devil," and "to be of the devil," are by this apoſtle uſed in the ſame ſenſe, chap. iii. 8. "He that "committeth ſin, is of the devil." And ver. 12. "Cain

"Cain who was of that wicked one," that is, "a "child of the devil," as he had called ſuch before, ver. 10. And becauſe children do reſemble their parents in nature and diſpoſition, therefore thoſe who are of a divine temper and diſpoſition, who reliſh the things of GOD, and are apt to embrace the truths of GOD when they are duly propounded to them, are ready to be taught of GOD, are ſaid likewiſe "to "be of GOD," John viii. 47. "He that is of GOD; "heareth GOD's words: ye therefore hear them "not, becauſe ye are not of GOD." So here in the text, "ye are of GOD;" ye are of a temper and diſpoſition apt to reliſh divine things, ready to embrace the truths of GOD, and ye have entertained them, and are his children, and are led by his Spirit, and have the Spirit of GOD dwelling in you; and this makes you victorious. "Ye have over-"come them." He had ſpoken immediately before of falſe prophets and Antichriſt, by which he doth point out not one particular perſon, but the whole number and faction of falſe teachers, as he tells us, chap. ii. 18. that "now there are many "Antichriſts. Ye are of GOD, and have over-"come them." This hath enabled you to reſiſt thoſe ſeducing ſpirits, and made you too hard for them; that "ye are of GOD: becauſe greater is he "that is in you, than he that is in the world." The force of the reaſoning is this; "ye are of GOD," that is, ye are taught of GOD, and have received his doctrine, and are born again by the word of GOD, and are his children, and being his children, ye have his Spirit; and the Spirit of truth and of GOD is a ſtronger principle, than that ſpirit of error and ſeduction which is in the world, that is, the

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SERM. devil. "Greater is he that is in you, than he that
CCXXXII. "is in the world." The Spirit of truth is more powerful than the ſpirit of error and ſeduction; and conſequently they that are of GOD, who ſincerely embrace and obey the truth, are able to overcome all the temptations of the world to apoſtaſy from the truth.

My work at this time ſhall be to ſhew what advantage good men, and thoſe who ſincerely embrace and obey the truth, have to ſecure them in the ways of truth and holineſs, againſt all the temptations of the devil and the world. I ſay, in the ways of truth and holineſs, becauſe there is a ſtrict connection between a hearty embracing of the truth of GOD, and a ſincere obedience to it. And the apoſtle ſpeaks of both, in oppoſition to the Gnoſtics, who did not only endeavour to ſeduce men to apoſtaſy from the chriſtian faith, but likewiſe from the practice of a holy life. Now to ſecure men againſt temptations to both theſe, they who "are of GOD," who ſincerely embrace and obey the truth, have a great advantage, becauſe that Spirit and principle which rules and ſways in them, is more powerful than that ſpirit which rules in the world and in the children of diſobedience. "Greater is he that is in you, than "he that is in the world;" and that in theſe three reſpects.

Firſt, divine truth carries greater evidence along with it.

Secondly, the motives to perſuade men to adhere to truth and holineſs are more operative and powerful.

Thirdly, there is a greater and more immediate aſſiſtance accompanies the truth of GOD, and they who

who entertain it are acted by a more powerful princi- SERM. CCXXXII.
ple than that which is in the world.

Firſt, divine truth carries greater evidence along with it. As will appear, if we conſider theſe three things.

I. The doctrines that are from GOD have more intrinſic goodneſs in them, and teach ſuch things as are more worthy of GOD, and more likely to proceed from him.

II. The external confirmation of theſe doctrines is greater, and hath more convictions in it.

III. The Spirit of GOD doth illuminate the minds of good men, and is concerned to lead them into the truth, and to ſecure from dangerous and damnable errors.

I. The doctrines which are from GOD have a more intrinſical goodneſs in them, and teach ſuch things as are moſt worthy of GOD, and more likely to proceed from him. Whoever ſuppoſeth GOD to make a revelation of himſelf to men, whereby to conduct them to happineſs, muſt in all reaſon ſuppoſe ſuch a divine doctrine to contain plain rules and directions to that end, and powerful helps, motives, and encouragements to enable and excite men to the obſervation of thoſe rules. For a man would naturally reaſon, that GOD, who is ſo infinitely good, would in revealing his will to men aim at no other end but the happineſs of his creatures; and that he being infinitely wiſe as well as good, the means would be proportionable, and conſequently that the laws and precepts which he gives would apparently tend to the happineſs of mankind: and becauſe, if men have immortal ſouls, and are deſigned to live for ever, their greateſt happineſs is that of another world;

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world; therefore it is reaſonable to conclude, that thoſe rules and directions ſhould principally regard the eternal happineſs of men in another life, and in ſubſerviency to that, ſhould reſpect likewiſe the temporal happineſs of men in this world.

And ſuch laws and rules being ſuppoſed, the next thing to be expected is, that GOD ſhould conſider the condition and circumſtances of perſons to whom theſe laws are given; and if they be averſe to them, that they ſhould be awaken'd and quicken'd to the obſervance of them, by ſuch motives and encouragements as are proper and powerful to that end; and if they be weak and impotent to the performance of what GOD's laws require, that they ſhould be enabled and aſſiſted by a proportionable ſtrength.

Now the doctrine of the chriſtian religion, which our bleſſed SAVIOUR revealed to the world, and (as we Chriſtians ſay) by divine commiſſion and authority, hath all theſe marks and characters of divinity upon it. The laws of it are plain and obvious to the common underſtanding of mankind; all men know what the precepts of piety, and goodneſs, and mercy, and righteouſneſs, and integrity, and truth, and faithfulneſs, of meekneſs, and humility, and patience, and forgiveneſs, and forbearance, and charity, mean; and ſo I might inſtance in temperance, and chaſtity, and all thoſe other virtues and graces which the chriſtian religion requires of us, and recommends to us. Theſe all tend to the advancement and perfection of our natures, and make us like to GOD, and capable of the enjoyment of him in the next life: and beſides this, they do apparently conduce in all reſpects to our temporal happineſs in this world. And excepting the caſe of perſecution (to which

which God hath promiſed abundant recompence in another world) the practice of theſe virtues is evidently to the advantage of particular perſons in this world, and to the peace and happineſs of human ſociety. SERM. CCXXXII.

And becauſe of the great corruption of human nature, and the ſtrong inclination of it to vice, the goſpel offers proportionable arguments and encouragements to men to perſuade them to their duty: an act of oblivion and pardon for what is paſt; perfect reconciliation to God in and through the merits and mediation of our bleſſed SAVIOUR; and the eternal rewards and puniſhments of another world; which to men that believe the immortality of their ſouls, and are not ſtupidly inſenſible of their intereſt, are the moſt powerful conſiderations in the world to take men off from ſin, and to bring them to goodneſs.

And becauſe the corruption of human nature hath brought a great weakneſs and impotency upon mankind, God is pleaſed in the goſpel to offer to men the powerful aſſiſtance of his grace and holy Spirit, to enable them to perform all this which he requires of them. And beyond this, what can we expect God ſhould diſcover to men, in order to their happineſs in this world, or the other? And in all theſe reſpects the doctrine of the goſpel, revealed from heaven by the Son of God, hath to any impartial conſiderer infinitely the advantage of Paganiſm or Mahometiſm, or any other doctrine or inſtitution that ever the world was acquainted withal.

But now if we bring the doctrines of falſe prophets and ſeducing ſpirits, whom St. John calls Antichriſts, to this trial, we ſhall find that they are quite

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quite of another ſtamp, deſtitute of goodneſs, and calculated not for the happineſs and benefit of men, but for baſe and unworthy ends; whereby it is evident that the teachers of them are not "of GOD, "but of the world, and therefore they ſpeak from "the world, and the world heareth them." And of this I will give two inſtances; one in thoſe falſe teachers the Gnoſtics, intended by the apoſtle in this epiſtle; and the other in a ſort of ſeducers nearer to us in our own times.

As for the Gnoſtics, beſides their contradicting and virtual renouncing the main principles of chriſtianity, by denying that CHRIST was really come in the fleſh, or that he really died, or roſe, affirming all this to be only in appearance; the ſum of their doctrine was either a heap of unintelligible words and phraſes, under a pretence of high myſtery; or a doctrine of liberty, as to all manner of vice and wickedneſs, under a pretence of perfection, and that whatever they did they could not ſin; both which at the firſt ſight are as plain evidence as any reaſonable man can deſire, that ſuch a doctrine could not be from GOD; nothing being more unlikely to be a divine revelation, than ſuch abſurd and confuſed ſtuff as no man can underſtand, and which hath no tendency to make men better. But above all, nothing can be more unworthy of GOD, nor more unlikely to proceed from him, than ſuch a doctrine as gives encouragement to vice and wickedneſs of life, under what pretence ſoever it be. For what can be more contrary to GOD, and a greater affront to the reaſon of mankind, then to let men looſe to do the vileſt and lewdeſt things, under pretence of perfection in goodneſs?

The

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The other inſtance I intend is nearer at hand, and concerns us more, and that is in the church of Rome, and thoſe falſe teachers which ſhe ſends abroad into the world, and which at this day ſwarm among us; and never did any character more unluckily agree to any ſort of men, than this of the apoſtle does to that church and the teachers of it, that "they are of the "world, and therefore they ſpeak of the world, and "the world heareth them."

In which words there are three remarkable characters given of falſe prophets and teachers.

1. That they are acted by a worldly ſpirit, and carry on a ſecular intereſt and deſign, "they are of "the world."

2. That they teach things ſuitable to their worldly intereſt and deſign, and therefore they ſpeak ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου, "from the world," according to that worldly ſpirit that acts them and rules in them.

3. Thoſe that hearken to them are a ſort of people like themſelves, of worldly affections and intereſts, "the world heareth them."

1. They are acted by a worldly ſpirit, and carry on a ſecular intereſt and deſign, of greatneſs and ambition, of dominion and tyranny, of riches and wealth. Any man that conſiders the church of Rome at this day, and by what ſteps and degrees, by what worldly ways and unworthy means ſhe hath attained to that power, and wealth, and greatneſs, to that dominion and tyranny, which now for ſeveral hundred of years ſhe hath exerciſed not only over the conſciences of men, in the moſt cruel manner, but even over temporal princes and ſtates, in commanding their treaſures and armies, in depoſing kings, and diſpoſing of their kingdoms, and in all imaginable inſtances of ſecular dominion.

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dominion and tyranny; cannot but be ſatisfied by what ſpirit they are acted, and that they as viſibly carry on a worldly intereſt and deſign, as the moſt ambitious ſecular prince ever did.

2. They teach things ſuitable to their worldly deſigns and intereſts. Let but any man impartially ſurvey thoſe which are the proper doctrines of the Romiſh church, and which we challenge for innovation and corruption of the truly ancient catholic and chriſtian doctrine, and it will at firſt ſight be evident to him, whither theſe doctrines tend, and that they do not ſerve the ends of religion, but of worldly greatneſs and dominion. What greater inſtance of ambition, than the claim of the univerſal ſupremacy of the biſhop of Rome over all Chriſtians and churches in the world, without the leaſt ground, or indeed colour of ground either from ſcripture or antiquity; and not only of an univerſal ſpiritual power over Chriſtians, but of an indirect temporal power over princes, in order to ſpiritual ends, which may be extended to any thing, and hath been, upon occaſion, to the donation of kingdoms, and the depoſing of princes, and the transferring of temporal dominion from lawful and hereditary princes to thoſe who had no manner of right or title? What more arrogant and directly tending to the enſlaving of mankind, than their pretence to infallibility, which yet they could never agree among themſelves where to place? What greater tyranny can be exerciſed over mankind, than to oblige them to an implicit faith and blind obedience, to believe what the church believes, though they do not know what it is; and to do what the church commands, though they doubt never ſo much of the lawfulneſs of it? than to hide

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the word of God from them, and to lock it up in an unknown tongue, and to deter them from the free uſe of that which was deſigned by God to be the great inſtrument of the ſalvation of mankind? than not to let men exerciſe their underſtandings in the ſervice of God; nor when they join in public prayers, to ſuffer them to know what it is they aſk of God; as if "the prieſt's lips were ſo to preſerve "knowledge," as to keep it all to themſelves, and not to make uſe of it for the benefit and edification of the people? And laſtly, to impoſe upon men, under pain of damnation, the belief of doctrines, not only contrary to the true ſenſe of ſcripture, but to all the ſenſe and reaſon of mankind, as is the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation? How is it poſſible to bring people into a greater ſubjection to the prieſts, and dependance upon them, than by auricular confeſſion, and that unreaſonable doctrine of making the efficacy of the ſacraments to depend upon the intention of the prieſt; and conſequently to put it into the power of a malicious and bad man to damn all his pariſh? And to mention but one thing more, what better contrivance could be thought of to enrich the church, and drain the purſes of the people, than their doctrines of purgatory, and prayers for the dead, of indulgences and ſatisfaction, and their form of ſins and vices of all kinds, called "the tax of the "apoſtolic chamber?" Can any man think that theſe and ſuch like doctrines "are of God," which do ſo directly ſerve the ends of covetouſneſs and ambition? Any one, that does not wilfully ſhut his eyes, may plainly ſee that ſuch doctrines and ſuch teachers "are of the world," and that they ſpeak and teach theſe things out of a worldly intereſt and deſign.

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And

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And here I might take notice likewiſe, that "they "ſpeak from the world" alſo in another ſenſe, by ſhewing what worldly and indirect means (not to ſay wicked and ſinful arts) they commonly make uſe of to make diſciples and gain proſelytes, by flattery and falſhood, by concealing and miſrepreſenting their own doctrines and practices, by defaming their adverſaries with known fictions and calumnies, tempting men from their religion by promiſes of temporal advantages, which, when they have gained them, they do not always perform and make good. Can any thing be more oppoſite to the genius of true religion, than to promote it by means ſo plainly contrary to the very nature and deſign of it?

3. Thoſe who hearken to them, and are ſeduced by them, are generally like themſelves, "they ſpeak "from the world, and the world heareth them." Not but that men of very honeſt and ſincere minds may be ſeduced into great errors, through prejudice, or weakneſs, or a melancholy ſuperſtition: but generally ſuch a religion as is calculated for the promoting of ſecular intereſt, and is carried on by ſecular arts, does gain upon carnal and worldly minds, and it is uſually ſome worldly conſideration or other that prevails with men to embrace and profeſs it. A religion that can find out ways to ſave men without ſincere repentance and a good life, is very fit to make proſelytes in the world; they that teach ſuch doctrines "ſpeak from the world, and the world is very "apt to hear them."

And thus I have done with the firſt thing, whereby it appears that divine truth carries great evidence along with it, namely, that the doctrines which are from GOD have more intrinſical goodneſs in them,

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and teach ſuch things as are more worthy of GOD, and more likely to proceed from him. I will be briefer in the reſt. SERM. CCXXXII.

II. The external confirmation of divine doctrines is greater, and carries more conviction along with it. By external confirmation, I mean chiefly that of miracles. And though the pagan religion pretended to ſome, and our SAVIOUR plainly foretold, that "Antichriſts and falſe prophets ſhould ariſe, and "ſhould ſhew ſigns and wonders," and St. Paul hath told us, that "the man of ſin ſhould come "with ſigns, and wonders, and mighty power;" yet none of theſe are of any great conſideration, in compariſon of the many, and great, and unqueſtionable miracles which were ſo univerſally wrought for the eſtabliſhment of the chriſtian religion, and continued for ſome ages; they bear no manner of proportion to them, neither for the nature, nor number, nor circumſtances of them, ſo as to ſhake or weaken any man's belief of the chriſtian religion, which had ſo much a greater confirmation given to it; eſpecially when our SAVIOUR did foretel, that falſe prophets ſhould do ſome things of this kind. For after a religion is eſtabliſhed by plain and unqueſtionable miracles, ſuch as for their number, nature, publicneſs, and continuance, and all imaginable circumſtances of advantage, were never upon any occaſion wrought in the world; I ſay, after this, it is not reaſonable, that one or two ſingle miracles or wonders pretended to, or really wrought by a falſe prophet, ſhould bring in queſtion the truth of a religion confirmed by a long ſeries of the greateſt and moſt unqueſtionable miracles.

SERM. CCXXXII. Beſides that the doctrine of it is ſuch as is worthy of God, and moſt likely to proceed from him *.

As for the miracles pretended to by the church of Rome, they are generally ſo fantaſtical and ridiculous, and ſo unlike the works of God, and wrought to no end and purpoſe, not among unbelievers for their conviction, which was always the great end of miracles, but among themſelves; and ſo deſtitute of credit, that the wiſeſt among themſelves are ſo far from believing them, that they are heartily aſhamed of them, ſo that we need not trouble ourſelves about them, for they are not like to give any great confirmation to any doctrine, which ſtands in ſo much need of confirmation themſelves.

III. Beſides the goodneſs of the doctrines which are from God, and the external confirmation of them by miracles, which is a great advantage to the reception of them, the Spirit of God doth likewiſe illuminate good men, and thoſe who are deſirous to know the truth, and hath promiſed to lead them into it, and to aſſiſt them in diſcerning between truth and falſhood. So our Saviour hath aſſured us, John vii. 17. "If any man will do his will, he ſhall "know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or "whether I ſpeak of myſelf." Beſides that the doctrines which are from God do commonly carry the marks and characters of their own divinity upon them, the providence of God is likewiſe particularly concerned, that good men, and thoſe who are of honeſt minds, and ſincerely deſirous to know the truth, ſhould not be deceived in matters of ſo great conſequence to the happineſs and ſalvation of mankind. To the ſame purpoſe is that promiſe, John xiv. 21.

* See of this more at large in the three laſt foregoing ſermons.

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" He that hath my commandments, and keepeth " them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth " me, ſhall be loved of my Father, and I will love " him; and manifeſt myſelf to him." God is always ready to reveal his will to thoſe who are ſincerely deſirous to do it, and will not ſuffer men of honeſt minds to err dangerouſly in matters wherein their eternal ſalvation is concerned.

Thus you ſee what advantage the Spirit of truth hath above the ſpirit of error and ſeduction; that divine truth carries greater evidence along with it, both in reſpect of the goodneſs of the doctrines which " are from God," and the great confirmation that is given to them, and the extraordinary illuminations of God's Spirit, which is wont to accompany the truths of God to the minds of good men, who are ready and diſpoſed to give entertainment to divine truth.

I ſhould now have proceeded to the ſecond advantage which the ſpirit of truth hath above the ſpirit of ſeduction, namely, that the motives to perſuade men to adhere to truth and holineſs, are more powerful and operative upon the minds of men, than the motives to the contrary.

And then, thirdly, that thoſe who embrace and obey the truth of God have a greater aſſiſtance, and are acted by a more powerful ſpirit and principle, than any is in the world. And this ſeems to be more eſpecially the meaning of that in the text, " Ye " are of God, little children, and have overcome " them: becauſe greater is he that is in you, than " he that is in the world." But theſe I ſhall not now enter upon.

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The advantages of truth, in oppoſition to error.

1 JOHN iv. 4, 5.

Ye are of GOD, *little children, and have overcome them: becauſe greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore ſpeak they of the world, and the world heareth them.*

SERM. CCXXXIII. The ſecond ſermon on this text.

I Proceed to the ſecond advantage which the ſpirit of truth hath above the ſpirit of error and ſeduction, namely, that the motives which good men have to perſuade them to adhere to truth and holineſs are more powerful, than the motives to the contrary. They who embraced the chriſtian religion did firmly believe the eternal rewards and puniſhments of another world; and this principle of faith being fixed and rooted in them, made them victorious over all the temptations of the world, over all the allurements and terrors of it; becauſe they were fully perſuaded of the happineſs and miſery of another world; the happineſs of thoſe who continued ſtedfaſt in the faith and obedience of the goſpel, and the dreadful miſery and puniſhment of thoſe who diſobeyed the goſpel of CHRIST, or apoſtatized from the profeſſion of it. Hence it was that they were not to be moved by any temporal conſiderations, either

ther of eaſe or advantage, or of trouble and perſe- SERM.
cution in this word. Their eternal intereſt lay ſo CCXXXII.
near their hearts, and they were ſo fully poſſeſſed with the belief of the everlaſting rewards and puniſhments of another life, that they overlooked the goods and evils of this life; and all temporal conſiderations, put into the ſcales againſt their everlaſting intereſt, were of no weight and moment with them.

And this our apoſtle very particularly inſiſts upon in this epiſtle, chap. v. 4, 5. "Whatſoever is born "of GOD, overcometh the world;" the children of GOD are victorious over the temptations of the world; and then he tells us what it is that makes them ſo, "and this is the victory that overcometh "the world, even our faith. Who is he that over- "cometh the world, but he that believeth that JE- "SUS is the Son of GOD?" The believing that "JESUS is the Son of GOD," infers the belief of his doctrine, and conſequently of that eminent part of it, the eternal recompence of another world, which whoſoever firmly believes, will be able to reſiſt and overcome all the temptations of this world. For by the belief of the chriſtian religion, and faith in the Son of GOD, we are fully aſſured of the reality and certainty of the mighty rewards and puniſhments of another world, though they be future and at a diſtance; and a firm perſuaſion of theſe things makes them in ſome ſort preſent to us as to their efficacy and operation: for to a wiſe and conſiderate man, a great good, or a great evil, which he believes will certainly befal him, according as he manageth his affairs well or ill, though it be at ſome diſtance, is of greater force than a far leſſer good or evil, which is preſent and nearer at hand. And of this we ſee

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many inſtances in the temporal concerns of men. A prudent man will forego his preſent eaſe and pleaſure, and part with a preſent advantage, lay down ready money, upon the certain proſpect of a far greater benefit that will come to him ſome years hence; and will undergo preſent pain and trouble, to prevent a far greater miſchief and inconvenience; and upon this principle of the belief of future good and evil, all the great affairs of the world are managed. Upon this principle men plow and ſow, and venture their eſtates in traffic to foreign parts, and truſt out their preſent ſtock, and purchaſe reverſions, and take phyſic, and cut off a limb, and run all thoſe hazards of eſtate and life, which we ſee men every day do; and all this for the ſecuring of ſome great advantage, or the preventing of ſome great miſchief, which though it be future and at a diſtance, yet they probably or certainly foreſee will happen to them.

And this principle is ſo much the ſtronger, and of greater force and efficacy, in matters of greater moment and importance, where the good hoped for, or the evil feared, is infinitely great, and concerns us for ever. If we firmly believe the reality and certainty of it, no temporal advantage or affliction can come in competition with them, in the calculation and account of a wiſe man; becauſe there is no proportion between finite and infinite, between the goods and evils which are temporal, and thoſe which are eternal; though the one be ſeen, and the other not ſeen; though the one be preſent and near to us, and the other future and at a great diſtance.

Upon this principle the firſt Chriſtians continued firm and ſtedfaſt in the belief and obedience of the goſpel,

gospel, and were bold and open in the profession of it, notwithstanding all the cruel assaults of persecution, though they hazarded the loss of all that was dear to them in this world, and exposed themselves to the suffering of whatever is grievous and terrible to flesh and blood. They "gloried in tribulation;" and did not only patiently submit to the greatest sufferings, but heartily praised GOD, "who accounted "them worthy to suffer for his name; they took "joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that "in heaven they had a better and more enduring "substance; they were tortured, not accepting de"liverance, that they might obtain a better resur"rection;" and when they were harassed with all the evils and calamities of human life, yet they "fainted not, knowing that their light affliction, "which was but for a moment, would work for "them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of "glory;" having their minds fixed, "not upon "the things which are seen, but the things which "are not seen; the things which are seen being but "temporal, but the things which are not seen being "eternal."

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Thus they overcame the world, not by the force and power of this world, but by the belief of another world, and of the mighty rewards and punishments of it. And this "faith purified their hearts," and reformed their lives, and made them "stedfast and "unmoveable" in their holy profession, and raised their minds above all the temptations and terrors of present and sensible things.

Let us now see on the contrary what kind of motives and arguments false teachers use to seduce men to their pernicious ways. "They speak from the

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"world," and commonly make uſe of baſe, and low, and temporal conſiderations, of little tricks and devices, and "all deceivableneſs of unrighteouſ-"neſs" (as the ſcripture calls it) to make diſciples, and gain proſelytes. They terrify them with temporal dangers and inconveniences, and repreſent to them ſuffering, and perſecution, and death, in all their frightful ſhapes, to deter them from profeſſion of the true religion: they ſet before them all manner of worldly baits and allurements, eaſe, and wealth, and preferment: they promiſe them liberty from the ſtrictneſs of thoſe laws and rules which religion ties them up to. By theſe arts and arguments the Gnoſtics of old uſed to tempt men from chriſtianity, and to ſhake their conſtancy in the profeſſion of it: and the ſame ways are ſtill put in practice by ſeducers at this day. They tell men of a glorious church, that hath great power and intereſt in the world; they amuſe them with a great deal of outward pomp and ceremony; they promiſe them preferment and great worldly advantages, by coming over to them; they threaten them with fire and faggot, with perſecutions and maſſacres; and where they have power, they hold them faſt when they have gained them, by the terror of an inquiſition; they promiſe them liberty, and what by the looſeneſs of their caſuiſtical divinity, and by the eaſineſs of their penances and abſolutions, and the cheats of their indulgences, they have deviſed ways to reconcile almoſt the worſt life that any man can lead, with fair hopes of getting to heaven at laſt. They tell them indeed, they muſt make ſome ſtop in purgatory: but they have ſo many ways to releaſe men from thoſe ſufferings, as do very much abate the terror of

of them, to any man that hath but credulity enough to believe them: for beſides the vaſt treaſure of merits in the common bank of the church, which the pope hath in his diſpoſal, and which nobody ought to doubt but that they are faithfully employed by him for the eaſe and deliverance of ſouls in purgatory; I ſay, beſides theſe, there are ſo many particular ways of effecting this buſineſs, that a man of ordinary diſcretion, with an indifferent purſe, may ſo order the matter, that he ſhall only paſs through purgatory, but need not make any ſtay in that place of torments. SERM. CCXXXIII.

But though theſe be their common motives and inducements to draw men to their communion, yet they do not wholly omit the arguments taken from the eternal happineſs and miſery of men in another world: for, to give them their due, there are no people in the world more prodigal of eternal ſalvation and damnation; they promiſe the one upon the eaſieſt terms, and threaten the other upon the leaſt diſpleaſure: if a man be in their communion, he can hardly fail of ſalvation; and if he be out of it, and differ from them in the leaſt point of faith, though but of their own making, he is ſure to be damned, though he had the grace and virtues, the ſanctity and charity of an angel: and this is the true reaſon why theſe arguments, which are ſo powerful in themſelves, ſignify ſo little from their mouths; becauſe every man that hath read the bible, and underſtands the chriſtian religion, plainly ſees that they have made terms of ſalvation and damnation quite different from thoſe which God hath conſtituted; ſo that theſe motives, which are ſo ſtrong and mighty in themſelves, quite loſe their edge and force, when

SER M. CCXXXII. they are managed by ſeducers in ſo undue a manner, and to ends and purpoſes ſo croſs to the main deſign of chriſtianity. This is the ſecond advantage which the Spirit of truth hath above the ſpirit of error and ſeduction, that the motives to perſuade men to adhere to truth and holineſs are really in themſelves more powerful than the motives to error and ſeduction.

Thirdly, thoſe who ſincerely embrace and obey the truth of GOD, have a greater aſſiſtance, and are acted by a more powerful ſpirit and principle, than that which is in the world, and this ſeems more eſpecially to be the meaning of the reaſon here given in the text, why the Spirit of truth is victorious over the ſpirit of error and ſeduction; "ye are of GOD, little children, "and have overcome them, becauſe greater is he "that is in you, than he that is in the world;" that is, the ſpirit which is in good men is more powerful than the devil, that evil ſpirit which inſpires and acts "the children of diſobedience."

For the farther explication of this, I ſhall do theſe three things.

I. Shew that there are theſe two principles in the world, the Spirit of GOD, and the devil, very active and powerful in good and bad men.

II. That the Spirit of GOD, which is in good men, is greater than he that is in the world.

III. In what ways the Spirit of GOD doth move and aſſiſt good men.

I. That there are theſe two principles in the world, the Spirit of GOD, and the devil, very active and powerful, the one in good, the other in bad men. This is very credible in the general, from the univerſal tradition and conſent of mankind, in the belief

lief of good and evil ſpirits attending men, and prompting them to good and evil: but we, who embrace the revelation of the goſpel, have a much firmer and ſurer ground for it, nothing being more plain and frequent in ſcripture, than that the holy Spirit of GOD guides and aſſiſts good men in doing the will of GOD; and that the devil "works in the children "of diſobedience," and is always ready to tempt men to, and promote any evil action or deſign. From hence it is that the ſcripture does almoſt every where aſcribe all good motions and actions to the operation and influence of GOD's grace and holy Spirit upon the minds of men; and the ſins of men to the temptation and ſuggeſtion of the devil; and this is ſo well known to any one converſant in the holy ſcriptures, that I need not cite particular texts for the proof of it.

It is true indeed, that the motion of GOD's holy Spirit, and the ſuggeſtions of the devil, are very ſecret to us, and imperceptible by us, ſo that no man can ſay certainly, that this good inclination or action is an immediate motion of GOD's holy Spirit in me, or that evil thought and deſign is an immediate ſuggeſtion of the devil; it is ſufficient for us, that we are aſſured from divine revelation in general, that the Spirit of GOD very frequently does, and is always ready to aſſiſt good men in the doing or ſuffering of GOD's will; as the evil ſpirit, where GOD permits him, is always buſy to tempt and ſeduce men to evil. And this ought not to be ſtrange to us, becauſe our SAVIOUR hath expreſly told us, that the Spirit of GOD works in men after an imperceptible manner, John iii. 8. "The wind bloweth where it liſteth, "and thou heareſt the ſound thereof, but canſt not

SERM. CCXXIII. "tell whence it cometh, and whether it goeth: ſo "is every one that is born of the Spirit." Though we do not know the manner of the Spirit's working, nor perceive the operations of it upon our minds, yet we find the effects of it in the renovation and ſanctification of our hearts. Thus by undeniable arguments men are aſſured of a divine providence governing the world, though men do not always ſee, nor can make out to others the particular interpoſitions of it, ſo as to ſay that this or that was an immediate effect of divine providence. To know certainly that a thing is, it is not neceſſary that we ſhould be able to give a particular account of all it's operations, and the manner of them; theſe may be hidden from us, and yet we may be ſufficiently aſſured by other arguments that there is ſuch a thing. Men are ſure they have ſouls, though they can give no account how the actions of underſtanding, and remembrance, and ſenſation are produced by them: ſo it is in the preſent caſe; we are ſufficiently aſſured from the word of GOD, that good and bad ſpirits have a great influence upon the minds of men, tho' we be not conſcious to their operations, and the manner of them.

II. The Spirit of GOD which is in good men is greater than he that is in the world; he is more able and ready to aſſiſt men to good pupoſes, than the devil is to tempt and help forward that which is evil. And this will appear, if we conſider theſe three things.

1. The Spirit of GOD is more powerful than the devil; and this is ſo evident in itſelf, that it needs no proof.

2. The

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2. The Spirit of GOD is as forward and willing to aſſiſt men to good purpoſes, as the devil is to the contrary. That extremity of malice and envy which is in evil ſpirits does no doubt make them very forward and active to do all the miſchief they can to mankind, by tempting and ſeducing them to ſin: but on the other hand, the utmoſt perfection of goodneſs, which in GOD is more and greater than the malice of the devil, will incline more ſtrongly the holy Spirit of GOD to pity, and aid, and help good men, than the malice of the devil can urge him to procure the harm and miſchief of mankind; and if we could ſuppoſe their will and inclinations equal, yet our comfort is, their power is not.

3. The Spirit of GOD hath a more free and immediate acceſs to the minds of good men, and a more intimate conjunction with and operation upon them, than the devil. The Spirit of GOD is always preſent to us, and willing to dwell and abide in us, and ready to help and aſſiſt us, if we be ready to obey his dictates, and comply with his holy and bleſſed motions; if we did not reſiſt, and quench, and grieve him, he would always take up his abode and habitation in us, and would be continually exciting, and guiding, and aſſiſting us to that which is good; he knows our hearts, and ſees all the ſecrets of our ſouls; knows all our inclinations, knows our weakneſs and our danger, what aſſiſtance we want, and when it will be moſt ſeaſonable; and is as intimate to us, and as conſcious to all the motions of our ſpirits, as we ourſelves are.

But now the devil is under great reſtraint, and cannot make nearer approaches to any man than GOD permits him; he does not know our hearts,

nor

SERM. nor can pry into the ſecret of our thoughts. GOD knows, but the devil does but gueſs at the thoughts, and deſigns, and inclinations of men; he hath no power over us, nor any acceſs to us, but what we give him, or GOD permits. By obedience to GOD's will, and reſiſting the temptations of the devil to ſin and diſobedience, we may not only keep out the devil, but keep him at a great diſtance, and make him "flee from us," ſo that we ſhall have little trouble or moleſtation from him: for though he be unwearied in his malicious attempts to ruin our ſouls, yet becauſe he cannot be every where, he haunts thoſe moſt where he hath greateſt hopes of ſucceſs, and is too eager and intent upon miſchief, to employ his time and temptations where he hath been often foiled, and hath reaſon to deſpair of victory. So that if all things be conſidered, it is our own fault if we want the aſſiſtance of GOD's holy Spirit, or if the devil have any great power over us: for GOD does not uſually, but upon great provocation, take away his holy Spirit from men, and lay them open to the aſſaults and temptations of the devil. If any be "led captive by the devil at his pleaſure," it is thoſe who have wilfully forſaken GOD, and "ſold "themſelves to do wickedly."

III. We will conſider in what ways the Spirit of GOD doth move and aſſiſt good men. Theſe two ways.

1. By exciting good motions in us, and enabling us to bring them to effect.

2. By ſupporting us under perſecution for religion.

1. By exciting good motions in us, and enabling us to bring them to effect. Theſe the apoſtle puts together, Phil. ii. 13. "For it is GOD which work-

"eth

" eth in you, both to will and to do of his good " pleaſure." It is he that ſtirs up good inclinations in us, and carries them on to effect. And this he makes an argument why we ſhould be diligent and induſtrious in the work of our ſalvation, becauſe GOD is ſo ready to aſſiſt us; " work out your own " ſalvation with fear and trembling: for it is GOD " which worketh in you both to will and to do of his " good pleaſure."

2. By ſupporting us under perſecution for religion. In caſe of extraordinary temptations, and violent aſſaults upon our conſtancy in religion, by fierce and cruel perſecutions, GOD affords immediate and extraordinary ſupports to good men, whereby they are many times borne up under the greateſt ſufferings, not only with patience, but with comfort and " joy unſpeakable and full of glory." Wherever GOD ſuffers good men to be tempted above humanity, he affords them an immediate divine aſſiſtance, to bear them up and make them victorious. So St. Peter tells us, 1 Pet. iv. 4. that thoſe who " ſuffer " and are reproached for the name of CHRIST, the " Spirit of glory and of GOD reſteth upon them." So likewiſe St. Paul, 1 Cor. x. 13. ſpeaking of thoſe who had not yet been ſet upon by any ſharp perſecution, " no temptation hath taken you, but ſuch as " is common to man," εἰ μὴ ἀνθρώπινος, nothing but what is human, what the ſpirit of a man may bear: but if ſuch a caſe happen, of temptation above nature, and the ſpirit of a man be too weak to ſupport itſelf under it, GOD will in that caſe afford men immediate and extraordinary ſupports and comforts, " GOD is faithful, who will not ſuffer you to be " tempted above that ye are able; but will with " the

SERM. CCXXXIII. "the temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that "you may be able to bear it;" and then it immediately follows, "wherefore my dearly beloved, "flee from idolatry;" becauſe GOD hath promiſed ſuch an extraordinary aſſiſtance in caſe of perſecution for religion, therefore he encourageth them to continue ſtedfaſt in the profeſſion of chriſtianity, and cautions them againſt apoſtaſy to the heathen idolatry.

The inference from all this diſcourſe, is to encourage us to continue ſtedfaſt in the truth, and in the practice of our holy religion, "to hold faſt the pro-"feſſion of our faith without wavering," and not to ſuffer ourſelves to be "ſhaken with every wind "of doctrine, by the arts and cunning of thoſe who "lie in wait to deceive; who creep into houſes, and "lead captive ſilly women, laden with ſins, and "led away by divers luſt." You ſee what kind of perſons theſe falſe teachers uſed to proſelyte; women of no virtue, of a proſtituted reputation, "laden with ſins, and led away with divers luſts;" a character that notoriouſly agrees to ſome ſeducers of our times.

Therefore let us "continue in the things which "we have heard," and not ſuffer ourſelves to be "moved from our ſtedfaſtneſs." The more we conſider our religion, and compare it with the unqueſtionable revelation of GOD in the holy ſcriptures, the greater reaſon we ſhall ſee to adhere to it. The doctrines of our religion "are of GOD," plainly contained in his word, and ſuch as are worthy of him, and likely to proceed from him, and tend to the good and happineſs of mankind, to make men really better, and to qualify them for that happineſs

pineſs which GOD hath promiſed to holy ſouls. The doctrines of our religion are free from the ſuſpicions of a worldly intereſt and deſign. But if we conſider the doctrines and innovations of that church which pretends to be the only chriſtian catholic ſociety in the world, we ſhall find that they are of another ſtamp, and of a quite contrary tendency, that they ſavour ſo rankly of a worldly intereſt, that any impartial man would at firſt ſight judge them to be the contrivances of worldly, covetous, and ambious men, and that they did not look like divine truths and doctrines that are "of GOD," but that they are "of "the world," and therefore they that propagate them, and would ſeduce men to them, "ſpeak from the "world, and the world heareth them."

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The evidences of the truth of the chriſtian religion; with the cauſe and danger of infidelity.

2 COR. iv. 3, 4.

But if our goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that are loſt: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, leſt the light of the glorious goſpel of CHRIST, *who is the image of* GOD, *ſhould ſhine unto them.*

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I Shall explain theſe words, and then proceed to handle many things contained in them.

The firſt ſermon on this text.

"If our goſpel be hid," or veiled; for by this metaphor

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metaphor the apoſtle alludes to what he had ſaid in the latter part of the foregoing chapter, concerning "the veil which was upon Moſes his face, and up-"on the hearts of the Jews, ſo that they could not "ſee to the end of that diſpenſation." There was a great deal of obſcurity in that adminiſtration: "but "the veil is done away in CHRIST." The goſpel is a clear revelation, and ſufficiently conſpicuous in itſelf: and now if it be hid from any, the fault is not in the obſcurity of the object, but in the blindneſs of men's minds.

"If our goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that are "loſt;" to them that deſerve to periſh, becauſe they will not ſee.

"In whom the god of this world hath blinded "the minds of them that believe not." Some of the fathers, as St. Auguſtin, and St. Chryſoſtom, and ſeveral of the Greek ſcholiaſts read theſe words otherwiſe; "in whom GOD hath blinded the eyes of the "men of this world, who believe not;" and ſo refer this blindneſs to GOD's permiſſion; in which ſenſe he is ſaid elſewhere in ſcripture, "to harden "men's hearts." The reaſon why they chuſe this reading of the words rather than the other, was in oppoſition to the Marcionites and Manichees; the former of which ſects made uſe of this text to countenance their opinion of two gods; the one of the old teſtament, whom they called "the juſt God;" the other of the new, whom they ſtiled "the good "God;" the former of theſe, ſay they, made the world, and is therefore here called "the god of this "world." The Manichees made uſe of this text to prove that the devil, whom they made the principle of all evil and imperfection, was the maker of this

this world, and is therefore called the god of it. SERM. CCXXXIV.

But there is no need why for this reaſon we ſhould depart from the uſual reading of the words; for there is nothing in the true importance of them that can give countenance to theſe errors. For the devil, though he did not make this world, may be ſaid to be "the god of it," upon a very good account, becauſe the greateſt part of the world being ſunk into idolatry and wickedneſs, were become his lot and portion, who worſhipped him as god, and did his works, and therefore were part of his dominion. So St. John tells us, 1 John iii. 8. "He that com-" mitteth ſin is of the devil:" and chap. v. 19. "we know that we are of GOD, and the whole "world lies in wickedneſs," ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται, which may be rendered more agreeably to the oppoſition which the apoſtle intended, "is ſubject to the "evil one," is in his power, and under his dominion. According to which Plutarch tells us, that "every unreaſonable and brutiſh nature belongs to "the lot of bad ſpirits." So that in this ſenſe the devil may very well be ſaid to be "the god of this "world," as he is elſewhere called by our SAVIOUR, "the prince of this world." John xii. 31. "Now "ſhall the prince of this world be caſt out;" and John xiv. 30. "The prince of this world cometh." And ſo the apoſtle, Eph. vi. 12. "The ruler of the "darkneſs of this world."

"Leſt the light of the glorious goſpel of CHRIST, "who is the image of GOD, ſhould ſhine unto "them, εἰς τὸ μὴ αὐγάσαι, leſt they ſhould ſee, or "behold the light of the glorious goſpel;" for ſo Heſych. tells us, that αὐγάζω αὐγάζομαι is ὁρῶ καὶ βλέπω. It is called "the glorious goſpel of CHRIST,"

SERM. CCXXXIV. because of the glorious confirmation that was given to it by his miraculous reſurrection and aſcenſion, and his ſending the holy Ghoſt into the world: and CHRIST is ſaid to be "the image of GOD," becauſe the power of the Deity did ſhew forth itſelf in the miracles which he wrought.

The words being thus explained, the moſt material things that offer themſelves to our conſideration in them are theſe three.

Firſt, the full and clear evidence which we have of the truth of the goſpel, or of the chriſtian religion; which the apoſtle expreſſeth to us in theſe words, "the light of the glorious goſpel of CHRIST."

Secondly, the cauſe of infidelity, notwithſtanding all the evidence which the goſpel carries along with it; which the apoſtle expreſſeth in theſe words, "in whom the god of this world hath blinded the "eyes of them that believe not."

Thirdly, the dangerous ſtate of thoſe, who having the goſpel propounded to them, do not believe it. The apoſtle tells them, they are loſt and undone. "If "our goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that periſh."

I begin with the firſt of theſe, namely, the full and clear evidence which we have of the truth of the goſpel or chriſtian religion. The only thing that can give us full aſſurance that any religion is true, is if we can be ſatisfied that it is from GOD; for being once ſatisfied of that, there can remain no doubt of the truth of any thing that comes from him, it being an eſſential part of the notion which every man hath of GOD, that he is "a GOD of truth."

Now there are two things muſt concur to give the mind of man full ſatisfaction that any religion is from GOD.

Firſt,

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Firſt, if the perſon that declares this religion give teſtimony of his divine authority, that is, that he is ſent and commiſſioned by GOD to that purpoſe. And,

Secondly, if the religion which he declares contain nothing in it that is plainly repugnant to the nature of GOD. I ſay, theſe two muſt concur: for though I could ſuppoſe a perſon to bring the higheſt teſtimony imaginable of his divine miſſion and authority, ſuppoſe he ſhould work a miracle for the confirmation of his doctrine; yet if there were any thing in the doctrine plainly repugnant to the natural notions which I have of GOD, I would not receive it as from GOD; the reaſon of which is plainly this, I can have no aſſurance that that is from GOD, which, if it were true, I ſhould be uncertain whether there were a GOD or not. I cannot poſſibly have any greater aſſurance that any thing is from GOD, than I have that there is a GOD: and I have no greater aſſurance that there is a GOD, than I have of his eſſential perfections, as that he is good, and powerful, and wiſe, and juſt, &c. For by the very ſame arguments that I come to know that there is a GOD, I know likewiſe that he muſt neceſſarily have theſe perfections. So that if any thing ſhould be offered to me as a revelation from GOD, which plainly contradicts thoſe natural notions which I have of him, I muſt neceſſarily reject it, yea though it were backed with a miracle; becauſe no man can at the ſame time believe that there is a GOD of ſuch and ſuch perfections, and entertain any thing as from him, which evidently contradicts thoſe perfections. And as this is reaſonable in itſelf, ſo it is clear from ſcripture. Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3. "If there ariſe among you a prophet,

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" or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a ſign,
" or a wonder: and the ſign or the wonder come
" to paſs, whereof he ſpake unto thee, ſaying, Let
" us go after other gods (which thou haſt not known)
" and let us ſerve them: thou ſhalt not hearken unto
" the words of that prophet." Here is the very caſe put, which I am ſpeaking of; a prophet comes and preacheth the worſhip of idols, as the ſun, moon, ſtars, &c. and for the confirmation of this he is ſuppoſed to work a miracle; and yet notwithſtanding this we are forbid to hearken to him, becauſe the doctrine that he brings does evidently contradict the natural notions which I have of GOD.

From all which it appears, that theſe two things muſt concur, to give us full ſatisfaction that any religion is from GOD, namely, firſt, that the perſon that declares this religion, gives teſtimony of his divine authority, that he is ſent and commiſſioned from GOD to that purpoſe. And,

Secondly, that the religion which he delares contains nothing in it that is plainly repugnant to the nature of GOD.

Now to bring this to my preſent purpoſe, I ſhould ſhew theſe two things concerning the chriſtian religion.

Firſt, As to the divine authority of the perſon that declares this religion to the world, that he was ſent and commiſſioned by GOD to that purpoſe.

Secondly, As to the religion itſelf, that there is nothing in it that is repugnant to the nature of GOD.

I intend chiefly to ſpeak of the firſt of theſe: for I dare ſay, any one that will freely and without prejudice conſider the chriſtian religion, as it is laid down in the ſcriptures, and not as it hath been abuſed

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by the wanton wits of ſome, and the deſigns of others, will find nothing in it but what is very ſuitable to the nature of GOD, and worthy of him; he ſhall find nothing in the propoſitions of faith, but what is ſuitable to the perfections of the divine nature, and hath a proper influence upon a godly practice; nothing in the precepts of life, but what plainly tends to the perfection of human nature, and the advantage and happineſs of mankind; nothing in the arguments and motives to obedience, as, namely, the love of CHRIST in dying for us, the aſſiſtance of GOD's holy Spirit, and the rewards and puniſhments of another world, but what is very accommodate to our nature, and ſuitable to the wiſdom, and goodneſs, and juſtice of GOD; and theſe three, the propoſitions of faith, the precepts of life, the arguments and motives to obedience, do conſtitute the chriſtian religion, and make up the whole goſpel. Concerning moſt of theſe, I have elſewhere treated at large; therefore I ſhall now apply myſelf chiefly to the firſt thing, namely, to ſhew that we have abundant ſatisfaction of the divine authority of the perſon that declares this religion to the world. SERM. CCXXXIV.

Now becauſe we live at a great diſtance from the age wherein this revelation of the goſpel by JESUS CHRIST was made to the world, it will be requiſite, for our clearer proceeding in this matter, to conſider diſtinctly theſe three things.

Firſt, what evidence thoſe who heard this doctrine of the goſpel immediately from our SAVIOUR, had for his divine authority. And this enquiry only reſpects the diſciples of our SAVIOUR, and the reſt of the Jews to whom he preached.

SERM. CCXXXIV. Secondly, what evidence thoſe had who received this doctrine by the preaching of the apoſtles. And this concerns thoſe to whom the goſpel was publiſhed by the apoſtles after our SAVIOUR's death.

Thirdly, what evidence after-ages, until the preſent time, have of this. And this properly concerns us, who live at a great diſtance from the times of the firſt publication of the goſpel.

And according to theſe three differences of time, there are likewiſe but three ways whereby we can come to the knowledge of matter of fact; and they are all ſuch as are capable of giving us ſufficient aſſurance.

The firſt is by the teſtimony of our own ſenſes; and this was the advantage of thoſe who heard our SAVIOUR's doctrine, and ſaw his miracles.

The ſecond by the report and relation of credible eye and ear-witneſſes; and this advantage thoſe had who heard the apoſtles.

The third by a conſtant and uncontrolled relation derived down ſucceſſively from one age to another, either by word, or writing, or both; which is the way whereby the ages, ſince the apoſtles to this day, have had the chriſtian religion derived down to them.

Firſt, to conſider what evidence thoſe who heard this doctrine of the goſpel immediately from our SAVIOUR himſelf, might have of his divine authority. Now there are but four ways that I can at preſent imagine (ſetting aſide an internal revelation in every man's mind) whereby men may be ſufficiently ſatisfied of the divine authority of any perſon.

I. If it be propheſied of him, and foretold by perſons divinely inſpired, that GOD will ſend ſuch an

an one as his meſſenger and prophet into the world, and afterward ſuch a prophet comes, to whom all the circumſtances of thoſe prophecies do agree. SERM. CCXXXIV.

II. By the teſtimony of an immediate voice from heaven.

III. By a power of working miracles.

IV. By the gift of prophecy, proved and made good by the accompliſhment of his own predictions.

Now I ſhall ſhew, that thoſe who lived in our SAVIOUR's time, and converſed with him, were capable of ſatisfaction concerning his divine authority all theſe four ways. I ſhall begin with the

I. They were capable of being eye-witneſſes that CHRIST was the great prophet and meſſenger of GOD, the Meſſias propheſied of, and foretold in the old teſtament. And here I do reaſonably take for granted the divine authority of the old teſtament, and that the prophecies therein contained are of divine inſpiration; becauſe thoſe to whom our SAVIOUR ordinarily preached, were only the Jews, who acknowledged the divine authority of thoſe books; and therefore the accompliſhment of thoſe prophecies in the perſon of our SAVIOUR, muſt needs be a ſatisfactory argument to them, that he was the Meſſias foretold.

Now to ſhew that the diſciples of our SAVIOUR, and the reſt of the Jews, were capable of receiving full ſatisfaction in this, that JESUS CHRIST was the Meſſias propheſied of in the old teſtament, I ſhall proceed by theſe ſteps.

1. That the prophecies in the old teſtament fix a time for the coming of the Meſſias; they give certain marks and ſigns whereby it may be known when the Meſſias would come; as that he ſhould come when

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when the government ſhould utterly be loſt from Judah, Gen. xlix. 10. "The ſcepter ſhall not depart from Judah till Shiloh come;" by whom the ancient Jews did underſtand the Meſſias, and nothing but plain malice againſt CHRIST and the chriſtian religion makes the modern Jews to depart herein from the ſenſe of their ancient maſters. That he ſhould come before the deſtruction of the ſecond temple. Hag. ii. 6, 7, 8, 9. "For thus ſaith the "LORD of hoſts, Yet once, it is a little while, and "I will ſhake the heavens, and the earth, and the "ſea, and the dry land. And I will ſhake all nations, and the deſire of all nations ſhall come, "and I will fill this houſe with glory, ſaith the "LORD of hoſts. The ſilver is mine, and the gold "is mine, ſaith the LORD of hoſts. The glory of "this latter houſe ſhall be greater than of the former, ſaith the LORD of hoſts: and in this place "will I give peace, ſaith the LORD of hoſts." From whence it is plain, that this houſe ſhall remain when "the deſire of all nations," that is, the Meſſias (according to the interpretation of the ancient Jews) ſhould come, and his preſence ſhould be the glory of the ſecond temple, and make it excel the firſt. And much to the ſame purpoſe, Mal. iii. 1. "Behold, I will ſend my meſſenger, and he ſhall prepare the way before me: and the LORD, whom "ye ſeek (that is, the Meſſias) ſhall ſuddenly come "to his temple; even the meſſenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he ſhall come, "ſaith the LORD of hoſts." That he would come at the end of ſo many "weeks of years, from the "going forth of the commandment to reſtore and "build Hieruſalem, and after ſo many weeks of "years

" years ſhould be cut of, and after that the city of " Hieruſalem and ſanctuary ſhould be deſtroyed, " and made deſolate," Dan. ix. 24, 25, 26, 27. So that you ſee the prophecies of the old teſtament do fix and aſcertain the time of the Meſſias his coming, both by infallible marks and ſigns, concomitant, and conſequent, and by an exact computation of years.

2. That the time fixed by thoſe prophcies for the coming of the Meſſias is already paſt. And this appears, in that all thoſe marks and ſigns, which it was foretold ſhould accompany and follow the coming of the Meſſias, are come to paſs, and the time limited for the coming of the Meſſias is long ſince expired.

For, (1.) The ſcepter is long ſince departed from Judah. The Jews are now diſperſed among all nations, their government loſt, their families confounded, inſomuch that they do not at this day know thoſe of the tribe of Judah from others. At the captivity the government was not utterly loſt, for they had a prince of the captivity; or at leaſt it was interrupted but for ſeventy years, and then it was reſtored to them again; but now the ſcepter hath been departed, and the government loſt for ſixteen hundred years.

(2.) The ſecond temple is deſtroyed, to which it was foretold, that " the deſire of all nations ſhould " come."

(3.) The city is deſtroyed and made deſolate, which was foretold ſhould be " after the cutting off " of the Meſſias."

(4.) The " ſeventy weeks of years are accom- " pliſhed " and expired long ſince, which were to begin

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begin from "the going forth of the commandment "to reſtore and build Hieruſalem," and to end at the coming of the Meſſias the prince. And whether we fix the beginning of theſe weeks in the firſt or ſecond year of Cyrus, or in the reign of one of the Darius's or Artaxerxes's (for by univerſal conſent it muſt begin in ſome of them) it matters not to my preſent purpoſe: for wherever it be fixed, theſe weeks are long ſince expired.

3. And conſequently the Meſſias is already come. For if the predictions of the old teſtament be true, which limit his coming to a certain time, which is fixed both by infallible marks, and by an account of years; I ſay, if theſe predictions be true, that he ſhould come at ſuch a time, and that time is paſt, then he is already come.

The Jews ſeek to evade the force of this argument by this pitiful ſhift, that the promiſes and predictions of the Meſſias were not abſolute, but conditional; that is, he ſhould come at ſuch a time, if the ſins and impenitency of men did not hinder. To this I anſwer,

(1.) This grants that the time for the coming of the Meſſias is paſt.

(2.) The reaſon that they give why GOD hath deferred the accompliſhment of thoſe prophecies and promiſes is, becauſe of the impenitency and wickedneſs of the people of the Jews at that time; which will agree very well with the hiſtory of the goſpel, and give us a very good account how they came to reject the Meſſias; becauſe they were ſo wicked, and their unbelief and impenitency were ſo great at that time.

(3.) There

(3.) There is no ſuch condition any where expreſſed in any of thoſe prophecies. SERM. CCXXXIV.

(4.) It is unreaſonable that there ſhould be ſuch a condition; that the impenitency of men ſhould hinder the coming of him, who was to bring the world to repentance, that is, to do that on his part which was ſufficient to that end.

(5.) Nothing could bring the veracity of GOD into queſtion more, than to make ſuch predictions conditional, as by the concurrent teſtimony of ſo many prophets have the time of their accompliſhment ſo punctually defined, and have not either a condition expreſly fixed to them, or in the nature of the thing neceſſarily implied: and if this were not ſo, any one might pretend to be a true prophet, though the event proved never ſo contrary to his prediction.

(6.) It appears out of the books of the Jews to have been a conſtant tradition among them, that the Meſſias ſhould come when the ſtate of the people was moſt degenerate, and there was the greateſt corruption and diſſolution of manners among them. And if this be ſo, then their wickedneſs and impenitency could be no obſtacle and impediment to the fulfilling of the promiſes and predictions concerning the Meſſias.

I ſhould have added in the next place, that the prophecies and promiſes in the old teſtament concerning the Meſſias, do all exactly, both as to the time, and all other circumſtances, agree to JESUS CHRIST, who was born at Bethlehem, who gave himſelf out to be the Meſſias, and whom we Chriſtians own to be ſo. But this I reſerve for the next opportunity.

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SERMON CCXXXV.

The evidences of the truth of the chriſtian religion.

2 COR. iv. 3, 4.

But if our goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that are loſt: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, leſt the light of the glorious goſpel of CHRIST, *who is the image of* GOD, *ſhould ſhine unto them.*

SERM. CCXXXV. The ſecond ſermon on this text.

IN diſcourſing on theſe words, I have begun to ſhew, how thoſe who heard the doctrine of the goſpel immediately from our SAVIOUR might be ſatisfied concerning his divine authority, and I mentioned four ways by which ſuch perſons might receive full ſatisfaction.

I. By the agreement of the prophecies and promiſes of the old teſtament to our SAVIOUR.

II. By the teſtimony of an immediate voice from heaven.

III. By the power of working miracles.

IV. By the gift of prophecy, proved and made good by the accompliſhment of his own predictions.

In diſcourſing of the firſt of theſe, I proceeded by theſe ſteps.

1. That the prophecies of the old teſtament did fix a time for the coming of the Meſſias, and gave certain

ertain marks and ſigns whereby it might be known when the Meſſias would come.

2. That the time fixed by thoſe prophecies for the coming of the Meſſias is already paſt.

3. And conſequently, that the Meſſias is already come. Thus far I have gone; and now add,

4. The prophecies and promiſes of the old teſtament concerning the Meſſias do all exactly, both as to the time and all other circumſtances, agree to JESUS CHRIST, that was born at Bethlehem, who have himſelf out to be the Meſſias, and whom we Chriſtians own to be ſo.

1. The time ſpecified in thoſe predictions agree to him. When he came into the world, the government was departed from Judah, for they were then in ſubjection to the Romans; and Herod their king, who was put into the government by the Romans, was an Idumæan. He came into the ſecond temple, which, notwithſtanding it's being re-edified by Herod, might juſtly be accounted the ſame, it not having been again deſtroyed by any enemy, but only pulled down in order to the beautifying and enarging of it; notwithſtanding which Joſephus every where calls it the ſame temple; for he reckons but two temples, the one that which Solomon built, which continued till the captivity of Babylon; the other that which Zerobbabel built, and that, he ſays, continued till the Romans deſtroyed Hieruſalem. And not long after our Saviour's death, the city of Hieruſalem and the ſanctuary were utterly demoliſhed, and "the end thereof was with a flood;" there was a total devaſtation of them; which plainly ſhews the ſeventy weeks did alſo expire about that time, wherever we fix the beginning of them; because

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cauſe the prophecy of Daniel tells us plainly, that towards the expiration of them, "the city and the "ſanctuary were to be deſtroyed;" which was fulfilled with a great deal of ſeverity, as if there were ſome extraordinary cauſe of thoſe fearful judgments which came upon them. And indeed we find that after they had commited the great ſin "of crucifying the "LORD of life," they gave up themſelves to all manner of wickedneſs, "filling up the meaſure of "their ſins, that wrath might come upon them to "the uttermoſt;" inſomuch that Joſephus tells us, "that he did verily believe, that if the Romans "had not come at that time to deſtroy them, either "the earth would have ſwallowed up their city, or "a flood have overwhelmed, or thunder and light-"ning, or fire from heaven, would have conſumed "them, like Sodom and Gomorrah; for," ſays he, "this generation was much more wicked than "they were."

And, which is a very conſiderable argument to the Jews, he came at the time when their whole nation were in expectation of the Meſſias; and indeed the whole world were about this time in expectation of a prince out of Judea. That the Jews did expect the Meſſias about this time, appears by the famous ſaying of one of their greateſt rabbies, Elias, that there ſhould be 2000 years before the law, 2000 years the law ſhould laſt, and 2000 years ſhould be the time of the Meſſias: and according to the moſt exact chronology, it was much about the 4000th year of the world that CHRIST was born. That a great part of the world beſides were at this time in expectation of a prince to ſpring out of Judea, appears from thoſe known teſtimonies of Suetonius and Tacitus.

citus. *Percrebuerat toto oriente vetus & conſtans opinio, eſſe in fatis, ut Judeâ profecti rerum potirentur,* ſaith Suetonius; and Tacitus to the ſame purpoſe. Both agree in the words of this prophecy, which ſeem to be taken out of the prophecy of Micah, ſpeaking of "Bethlehem in the land of Judea; out "of thee ſhall come a governor." And Suetonius tells us farther, that the belief and expectation of this among the Jews was ſo great at that time, that this was the cauſe of their rebelling againſt the Romans. A juſt judgment of GOD upon them, that thoſe who had rejected the true Meſſias ſhould be deluded to their own ruin by the hopes of a falſe one. SERM. CCXXXV.

2. All other circumſtances of thoſe promiſes and prophecies are exactly anſwered in the hiſtory and relation which the goſpel gives of him. He was emphatically "the ſeed of the woman," according to the firſt and very obſcure promiſe made to our firſt parents, Gen. iii. 15. "The ſeed of the woman "ſhall bruiſe the ſerpent's head;" I ſay, he was emphatically "the ſeed of the woman," being, as our books of the goſpel tell us, born of a pure virgin, which never knew man. He was "the ſeed "of Abraham," according to the ſecond promiſe of him made to Abraham, Gen. xii. 3. "In thee ſhall "all the families of the earth be bleſſed." He was a "prophet like unto Moſes," being a great worker of miracles above any of the prophets, as Moſes alſo was; and by whom GOD gave a new law, as he did by Moſes, according to the other famous promiſe of him, Deut. xviii. 15. "A prophet ſhall the "LORD your GOD raiſe up unto you, like unto "me."

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He was "of the tribe of Judah, and of the ſeed "of David," as it was foretold the Meſſias ſhould be; therefore he is called in the goſpel, "the ſon of "David;" and the apoſtle to the Hebrews, chap. vii. ver. 14. appeals to the Jews concerning this, as a thing clear and acknowledged among them, "It "is evident that our LORD ſprang out of Judah;" which he would not have affirmed to the Jews without proof, if it had not been granted by them.

For the other, that he was of the ſeed of David, the Jews will by no means admit as a thing at all evident from the hiſtory of the goſpel concerning him: for, ſay they, if that appear any where, we ſhould find it in his genealogy, but there we find no ſuch matter; there indeed we have the genealogy of Joſeph very differently related by the two evangeliſts, Matthew and Luke; but what is this to the genealogy of CHRIST, when the Chriſtians themſelves avowedly declare, that Joſeph was not his father? It is granted that Joſeph was of David's line; but to prove that CHRIST was really deſcended from David, inſtead of the genealogy of Joſeph, they ſhould have ſhewn Mary's.

This is a very malicious and ſpiteful objection, and the Jews inſiſt very much upon it: but yet I think it is capable of a very ſatisfactory anſwer, in which I ſhall proceed by theſe ſteps.

(1.) We will grant that both the genealogies of our SAVIOUR, that in Matthew, and that in Luke, are intended to ſhew that Joſeph was of Abraham's and David's line, and that neither of them are the genealogy of Mary. Some indeed have thought ſo, but, as it ſeems to me, with very little probability; I incline much rather to Grotius his excellent conjecture

ture about it, that Matthew's genealogy gives us an account of the ſucceſſion of the royal family down as low as Joſeph, and that in St. Luke the direct ſeries of Joſeph's anceſtors. SERM. CCXXXV.

(2.) The Jews grant that it hath been an ancient tradition among Chriſtians, that Joſeph and Mary were of the ſame family, and that Mary was *virgo ἐπίκληρος*, 'one that had no brethren, an heireſs, or co-heireſs, and ſo according to the jewiſh cuſtom ſhe was bound to marry in her family; which the Jews were eſpecially careful of in the family of David to preſerve the ſucceſſion of the royal line, of which the Meſſias was to come.

(3.) The Jews have nothing to object againſt this which ſhews it improbable.

(4.) If ſo, that they were of the ſame family, then the genealogy of Joſeph, though not directly and expreſly, yet by conſequence was the genealogy of Mary; and conſequently thoſe genealogies in the goſpel do ſufficiently ſhew that CHRIST was the ſon of David.

(5.) It cannot be imagined that the evangeliſts ſhould have omitted the genealogy of Mary, if it had not been included in that of Joſeph, eſpecially St Matthew, who in his genealogy expreſly tells us, that he intended to ſhew that he was "the ſon of "David;" and alſo denies Joſeph to have been his real father.

(6.) If there had been any queſtion, whether Mary was of the line of David, the Jews would certainly in that time have rejected him from being the Meſſias, upon that very account, nothing being more plauſible for them to have had ſaid than this, that he pretended to have no father, and to be born

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of a virgin, who was not of the line of David, how could he then be the Meſſias, who was to be "of the "ſeed of David?" But that he was always owned by the Jews to be of that ſeed, appears by the title, ſo frequently given to him, of "the ſon of David."

It was propheſied that the Meſſias "ſhould be "born in Bethlehem of Judah," Micah v. 2. which you find accordingly fulfilled, Matt. ii. 6. the providence of GOD ſo ordering it, that Auguſtus ſhould then lay a general tax, which occaſion brought up Joſeph and Mary to Bethlehem; not only that ſhe might be delivered there, but that their names being there entered, their family might be aſcertained, and there might no doubt afterwards ariſe, but that they were "of the line of David."

It was foretold he ſhould be "born of a virgin," Iſa. vii. 14. which you ſee accordingly fulfilled, Matt. i. That this is not the primary, but the myſtical ſenſe of that place in Iſaiah, I think may without prejudice be granted to the Jews, who in innumerable places of the old teſtament do, beſides the firſt and literal ſenſe, allow of a myſtical one: and if it be objected that this is only the ſaying of us Chriſtians, that CHRIST was born of a pure virgin; to them it is eaſily anſwered, that if this be foretold of the Meſſias, whoever he be, that he ſhall be born of a virgin, as the Jews generally grant, we have as much aſſurance of this, as they can have, or imagine to have of theirs, whenever he ſhould come. For it is not any report or tradition that can give credit to ſo ſtrange a thing, but the unqueſtionable miracles which he wrought, which prove him to come from GOD, and conſequently to be no impoſtor, but to be all that he pretended he was.

It

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It was foretold of him that he ſhould be a great prophet and teacher, Deut. xviii. 15. "A prophet "ſhall the LORD your GOD raiſe up unto you, like "unto me." Iſai. lxi. 1. "The Spirit of the LORD "is upon me, becauſe he hath anointed me to "preach the goſpel to the poor," &c. Ezek. xxxiv. 23. "And I will ſet up one ſhepherd over them, "and he ſhall feed them, even my ſervant David; "he ſhall feed them, and he ſhall be their ſhep-"herd." And chap. xxxvii. ver. 24. "And Da-"vid my ſervant ſhall be king over them, and they "all ſhall have one ſhepherd: they ſhall alſo walk "in my judgments, and obſerve my ſtatutes, and "do them." And this was eminently fulfilled in that he foretold ſeveral future contingents; as his own crucifixion, Peter's denial of him, the deſtruction of Hieruſalem, the riſing of falſe Chriſts, and falſe prophets, (which I ſhall particularly conſider hereafter) the deſcending of the holy Ghoſt, and the admirable ſucceſs of the goſpel in the world; in that he preached ſo pure and perfect a doctrine to the world, and with ſo much authority; a doctrine ſo excellent and reaſonable, ſo ſuitable to the neceſſities, and agreeable to the reaſon of mankind; a doctrine which tendeth ſo much to the perfecting of human nature, and to the peace and happineſs of human ſociety, above any other inſtitution in the world.

It was foretold that he ſhould do many and great miracles, and ſuch as ſhould be beneficial to men, Iſai. xxxv. 5, 6. "Then the eyes of the blind ſhall be "opened, and the ears of the deaf ſhall be unſtopped. "Then ſhall the lame man leap as a hart, and the "tongue of the dumb ſing." And was not all this

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eminently accompliſhed in JESUS CHRIST? What greater, or more public, or more frequent and numerous, or more beneficial miracles, can almoſt be imagined, than CHRIST did? So that we may ſay to the Jews, as ſome of them did to the Phariſees in our SAVIOUR's time; you talk of a Meſſias to come; yet "when he is come, will he do greater "works than this man hath done?"

It was foretold of him that the people ſhould receive him with joy and triumph, when "he came "riding upon an aſs to Hieruſalem," Zech. ix. 9. which we find fulfilled Matth. xxi.

It was propheſied that he ſhould "ſuffer many "things, and be rejected, and deſpiſed of men," Pſal. xxii. 6. "But I am a worm, and no man; a "reproach of men, and deſpiſed of the people." Iſai. liii. 3. "He is deſpiſed and rejected of men, a "man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief: and "we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was "deſpiſed, and we eſteemed him not." Which we find fulfilled all along in the hiſtory of the goſpel.

It was propheſied that he ſhould be "ſold for "thirty pieces of ſilver." Zech. xi. 12. which we find fulfilled, Matth. xxvii. 9. That when he who was "the ſhepherd was ſmitten, the ſheep ſhould be "ſcattered," Zech. xiii. 7. which was accompliſhed, Matth. xxvii. 56. "All the diſciples forſook him, "and fled." That he ſhould "be ſcourged, and "buffeted, and ſpit upon," Iſai. l. 6. I gave my "back to the ſmiters, and my cheeks to them that "plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from "ſhame and ſpitting;" which you find punctually accompliſhed Matth xxvii.

It

It was foretold that he ſhould die a violent death, Iſa. liii. 8. "He was cut off out of the land of the "living." Dan. ix. 26. "Meſſias the prince ſhall "be cut off." That he ſhould undergo all theſe ſufferings with the greateſt patience, Iſai. liii. 7. "He was oppreſſed, and he was afflicted, yet he "opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb "to the ſlaughter; and as a ſheep before her ſhearers "is dumb, ſo he oppened not his mouth." That he ſhould ſuffer all theſe things "not for himſelf, "but for ſinners." Iſai. liii. 5. "He was wounded "for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our ini-"quities; the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon "him, and with his ſtripes we are healed." And, ver. 6. "The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity "of us all." And ver. 8. "For the tranſgreſſion "of my people he was ſtricken." And ver. 10. "His ſoul was made an offering for ſin." And ver. 12. "He bare the ſins of many." And Dan. ix. 26. it is ſaid the Meſſias "ſhould be cut off, but "not for himſelf." SERM. CCXXXV.

It was foretold, that "his hands and feet ſhould "be pierced," Pſal. xxii. 16. "he ſhould be num-"bered with the tranſgreſſors," Iſai. liii. 12. And accordingly he was condemned as a malefactor, to ſuffer with malefactors, being "crucified between "two thieves."

It was foretold that he ſhould have "gall and "vinegar given him to drink," Pſal. lxix. 22. that he ſhould be derided in the midſt of his ſufferings, Pſal. xxii. 7, 8. "All they that ſee me, "laugh me to ſcorn; they ſhoot out the lip, they "ſhake the head, ſaying, He truſted on the LORD, "that he would deliver him: let him deliver him,

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" ſeeing he delighted in him." And this was moſt punctually accompliſhed Matt. xxvii. 39, 43. " And " they that paſſed by, reviled him, wagging their " heads, and ſaying, He truſted in GOD, let him " deliver him now, if he will have him."

It was foretold that he ſhould cry out under his ſufferings, Pſal. xxii. 1. " My GOD, my GOD, why " haſt thou forſaken me? why art thou ſo far from " helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" That he ſhould pray for his wicked perſecutors, Iſai. liii. 12. that " he made interceſſion for the tranſ- " greſſors:" and ſo he did moſt affectionately, " Father, forgive them, for they know not what " they do." That they ſhould " caſt lots for his " garment," Pſal. xxii. 18. All, or moſt of which predictions were by the ancient Jews underſtood of the Meſſias, and were exactly fulfilled in JESUS CHRIST, as appears fully out of the hiſtory of the goſpel.

And then for the circumſtances of his burial, It was foretold that he ſhould " make his grave " with the rich," Iſai. liii. 9. which was accompliſhed in that he was put into Joſeph of Arimathea's own tomb.

His reſurrection was foretold to be " after three " days," Hoſea vi. 24. as ſeveral of the Rabbies underſtood that place; however that he ſhould riſe again, may be plainly argued from thoſe texts, where is is ſaid, that " his kingdom ſhall have no end;" and Iſai. liii. 10. where it is ſaid, that after his death, " he ſhall ſee his ſeed, and prolong his days:" and " that the pleaſure of the LORD ſhall proſper " in his hand." But moſt expreſly, Pſal. xvi. 10. " Thou wilt not leave my ſoul in hell, neither

" wilt

" wilt thou ſuffer thine holy one to ſee corrup- SERM. CCXXXV.
" tion."

And his " ſitting at the right-hand of GOD," which ſuppoſeth his aſcenſion into heaven, Pſal. cx. 1. " Sit thou at my right-hand, until I make thine " enemies thy footſtool."

The wonderful ſucceſs of the goſpel, and the univerſal ſpreading of it through the world, was foretold Gen. xii. 3. " In thee ſhall all the nations of " the earth be bleſſed;" which implies, that the bleſſing of the goſpel, which the Meſſias brought to the world, ſhould be univerſally diffuſed. Gen. xlix. 10. " To him ſhall the gathering of the people be." Pſal. ii. 8. GOD promiſeth there, to " give CHRIST " the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermoſt " parts of the earth for his poſſeſſion." Beſides ſeveral other places of the pſalms and prophets, too many to be reckoned up.

Now the accompliſhment of all theſe prophecies happened in their days who ſaw our SAVIOUR, and converſed with him: ſo that they were capable of receiving full ſatisfaction concerning his divine authority, and that he was a perſon ſent of GOD to teach the world, and aſſure them, that he was the Meſſias foretold and propheſied of in the books of the old teſtament, which being by them received as of divine inſpiration, did conſequently aſſure them that he was from GOD.

II. The ſecond way whereby we may be ſatisfied concerning the divine authority of a perſon, is by the teſtimony of an immediate voice from heaven: and this teſtimony CHRIST had twice given to him; the firſt publicly before a great aſſembly of people at John's baptiſm, which was juſt before he began his

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his public miniſtry, Matt. iii. 16, 17. "The holy "Ghoſt deſcending upon him like a dove, as he "came out of the water; and there was a voice "from heaven, which ſaid, This is my beloved "Son, in whom I am well pleaſed." The ſame voice was heard by Peter, James, and John at his transfiguration on the mount, as you may ſee Luke ix. 35. And this St. Peter mentions, as a conſiderable argument of CHRIST's divine authority, 2 Pet. i. 16, 17, 18. "For we have not followed cunningly "deviſed fables, when we made known unto you the "power and coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST: "but were eye-witneſſes of his majeſty. For he re-"ceived from GOD the Father honour and glory, "when there came ſuch a voice to him from the ex-"cellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom "I am well pleaſed. And this voice which came "from heaven we heard when we were with him "in the holy mount."

Indeed he makes this teſtimony to be ſuch an argument, as concurring with that which I mentioned before, is ſufficient to perſuade one that CHRIST was ſent from GOD; but he does not make it to be equal to that which de adds at the 19th verſe, "We "have alſo a more ſure word of prophecy, where-"unto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light "that ſhineth in a dark place," &c. intimating, the prophecies of the old teſtament were greater confirmation than this ſingle teſtimony of a voice from heaven does amount to.

III. I proceed to the next evidence, which thoſe who lived in our SAVIOUR's time had of his divine authority, viz. the power of working miracles, which he was endued withal; and this is the higheſt teſtimony

teſtimony that can be given to any perſon that he is ſent from GOD. And in this reſpect chiefly is the goſpel called "the light of the glorious goſpel of "CHRIST," becauſe of thoſe glorious miracles whereby the goſpel was confirmed. This is, as it were, the broad ſeal of heaven, which is ſufficient to give confirmation to any doctrine, which does not evidently contradict the perfections of the divine nature: and it is not credible, that the providence of GOD is ſo little tender of the concernments of mankind, as to communicate this power to any perſon that will abuſe it to the confirmation of a lie. I deny not but the devil may do many ſtrange things, and ſuch as we cannot diſtinguiſh from ſome ſort of miracles*; and where men by ſome great precedent provocation, have made it juſt for GOD "to give them up to ſtrong deluſions, to believe "lies, becauſe they would not believe the truth, "but had pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs," there GOD may permit the devil to work ſtrange wonders, as it is foretold, 2 Theſſ. ii. 9. that the coming of Antichriſt "ſhall be after the working of Satan, with "all power, and ſigns, and lying wonders, and all "deceivableneſs of unrighteouſneſs." But in this caſe there will remain two ways whereby impartial and conſiderate men, and ſuch as are not blinded by prejudice or their luſts, may ſufficiently diſcover, that this is not from GOD. SERM. CCXXXV.

1. By the abſurdity of the doctrine which thoſe wonders are brought to confirm: and ſuch were the lewd, and filthy, and ſenſeleſs doctrines of the Gnoſtics, to which Simon Magus pretended to

* Of this ſee more ſerm. CCXXIX, CCXXX, CCXXXI. in this volume.

give

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give a confirmation by the wonders that he wrought. And this very probably may be that which the apoſtle refers to in this chapter. And ſuch likewiſe are ſeveral of the doctrines of popery: ſuch as the adoration of the virgin Mary, of ſaints and images, and the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation; for the confirmation of which, they pretend a great many wonders have been wrought.

2. By the contrariety of the doctrine to that which hath had the confirmation of far greater miracles. Therefore if we ſhould grant to the Papiſts, that ſeveral of thoſe miracles which they brag of, were really wrought, (which, conſidering the infinite cheats and impoſtures which have been practiſed by them in that kind, and have been diſcovered, we have no reaſon to grant;) yet becauſe the doctrine, which they pretend to confirm, is abſurd, and unreaſonable, and contrary to the doctrine which they themſelves own to have had a far greater confirmation by miracles far greater, and more unqueſtionable, more publicly done, and in ſuch a manner, and with ſuch circumſtances, as do free them from all ſuſpicion of impoſture; I ſay, for this reaſon we cannot admit thoſe doctrines to be of divine authority; becauſe the confirmation, which is given to them by thoſe wonders, is overpowered by a greater and more divine teſtimony; as the magicians of Pharaoh, though they did many odd feats, yet were plainly maſtered and conquered by the greater miracles which Moſes wrought.

The ſum is this, that wherever any perſon is endued with an eminent power of working miracles, ſuch as are of the firſt rank, great, and unqueſtionable, and many, and publicly wrought, that is one of

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of the higheſt evidences we can have of the divine authority of any perſon or doctrine. Therefore Nicodemus does upon this ground very reaſonably conclude, that our SAVIOUR was ſent from GOD, John iii. 2. "We know that thou art a teacher "come from GOD: for no man can do thoſe mira- "cles which thou doſt, except GOD be with him." And our SAVIOUR himſelf inſiſts upon this frequently as the great proof of his divine authority, Matt. xi. 3, 4. When John Baptiſt ſent two of his diſciples to him to be ſatisfied whether he was the Meſſias, he bids them report to John what the doctrine was which they heard him preach, and what miracles they ſaw him work for the confirmation of it; "Go and ſhew John thoſe things which ye do ſee "and hear; the blind receive their ſight, and the "lame walk, and the lepers are cleanſed, and "the deaf hear, and the dead are raiſed up, and "the poor have the goſpel preached unto them." John v. 33, 36. our SAVIOUR there tells the Jews, that "John bare witneſs of him;" and that might ſatisfy them, becauſe they looked upon John as a prophet: "But, ſaith he, I have a greater witneſs "than that of John; for the works which the Fa- "ther hath given me to finiſh, the ſame works that "I do bear witneſs of me, that the Father hath ſent "me." John xv. 24. "If I had not done among "them the works which none other man did, they "had not had ſin." This was the great aggravation of their unbelief, that they reſiſted the evidence of ſo great miracles, ſuch as no man in the world ever wrought *.

* See more of this, ſerm. CCXXII. in this vol.

I ſhould

I ſhould now briefly run over the chief of thoſe miracles of our SAVIOUR, which we find recorded in the hiſtory of the goſpel; and ſhew that they have all the advantages that miracles can have, to give ſatisfaction to men concerning their reality. But this I reſerve for my next diſcourſe.

SERMON CCXXXVI.

The evidences of the truth of the chriſtian religion.

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2 COR. iv. 3, 4.

But if our goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that are loſt: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, leſt the light of the glorious goſpel of CHRIST, *who is the image of* GOD, *ſhould ſhine unto them.*

SERM CCXXXVI. The third ſermon on this text.

IN my laſt diſcourſe, I was conſidering the third evidence which thoſe who lived in our SAVIOUR's time had of his divine authority, viz. the power of working miracles, with which he was endued. And in treating on this, I propoſed briefly to run over the chief of thoſe miracles of our SAVIOUR, which we find recorded in the goſpel, and to ſhew that they have all the advantages that miracles can have, to give ſatisfaction to men concerning their reality. And that I may proceed in ſome kind of

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of order and method, I ſhall reduce the miracles that concern our SAVIOUR to theſe three heads.

Firſt, the miracles of his life.

Secondly, thoſe that were wrought at his death.

Thirdly, the great miracles of his reſurrection from the dead, and thoſe two that were conſequent upon it, his aſcenſion into heaven, and his ſending the holy Ghoſt upon the apoſtles and Chriſtians in miraculous gifts and powers.

I begin with the firſt, the miracles of his life. And in ſpeaking of theſe, I ſhall ſhew that they had all the advantageous circumſtances to convince men of the reality of them, and to free them from all ſuſpicion of impoſture. They were many, they were great, and unqueſtionable miracles; they were frequently wrought, and for a long time together, publicly, and in the preſence of multitudes; and they were beneficial, and for the good of men.

1. They were many. There might be ſomething of impoſture ſuſpected in a few inſtances, that might be choſen out for the purpoſe. But our SAVIOUR gave inſtances of his divine power in ſeveral kinds, ſo that there is ſcarce any thing that is miraculous can be inſtanced in, wherein he did not ſhew his power. He healed all manner of diſeaſes, and that in multitudes of people, as they came accidentally without any diſcrimination, Matt. iv. 23, 24. And though moſt of his miracles were healing, yet he gave inſtances in other kinds; as in turning of water into wine, commanding down the ſtorm, and walking upon the waters, &c. And though the hiſtory of the goſpel mention very many miracles that he wrought, yet St. John tells us, that thoſe that are recorded are but very few in compariſon

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pariſon of what he did, John xx. 30. "And many "other ſigns truly did JESUS in the preſence of his "diſciples, which are not written in this book." And chap. xxi. 35. "And there are alſo many other "things which JESUS did, the which if they ſhould "be written every one, I ſuppoſe that even the "world itſelf could not contain the books that "ſhould be written." An hyperbolical expreſſion, to ſignify the great number of his miracles and actions, beſides what are recorded by the evangeliſts.

2. As they were many, ſo they were great and unqueſtionable, both as to the manner of doing them, and as to the things that he did.

(1.) Many things which were not miraculous in themſelves, yet were ſo as to the manner of doing them, which was not by any magical words, and figures, and charms, and ſuperſtitious rites, according to the manner of thoſe who pretended to work miracles among the heathens. It is true he healed many diſeaſes which were curable by phyſic and art: yet then the manner was ſuch, as was above the ordinary courſe of nature; many he cured by a word only, or by a touch, and the cure was wrought immediately, and in the ſame inſtant when he ſpake the word, though they were at a great diſtance. Many were cured without his taking any notice of them, by touching the very hem of his garment; of all which I might give ſeveral inſtances, but that they are ſo well known to thoſe who are acquainted with the hiſtory of the goſpel. Sometimes indeed he performed the cure by degrees; as in the man that was reſtored to ſight, and ſaw men at firſt confuſedly, and without any diſtinction, as if they had been

been trees, Mark viii. 24. Sometimes he uſed ſome kind of means, but ſuch as were very diſproportionable in their nature to the effect that was produced; as in the caſe of the deaf man, which he cured by putting his finger into his ear, and by his ſpittle, Mark vii. 33. and the blind man whoſe eyes he anointed with clay mixed with ſpittle, and ſent him to waſh in the pool of Siloam, John ix. 6, 7. but moſt of his miracles he wrought in an inſtant, and merely by his own word. SERM. CCXXXVI.

(2.) As to the things he did, many of them were miraculous in themſelves. He cured many inveterate diſeaſes, as, Matt. ix. 20. a woman that had an iſſue of blood twelve years. He made the woman ſtraight by touching her, that had been crooked and bowed together eighteen years, Luke xiii. 13. and the man that had an infirmity thirty-eight years, only by bidding him take up his bed and walk, John v. 8. He cured the man that was born blind, John ix. and, which all men will grant to be miraculous, and to have exceeded all the power of nature that we know of, he raiſed ſeveral from the dead; and becauſe it might be ſaid that ſeveral of thoſe were not really dead, but in a delirium or ſwoon, there is one inſtance beyond all exception, John xi. he raiſed up Lazarus to life, after he had been four days in the grave.

3. He wrought his miracles frequently, upon all occaſions that were offered, and for a long time together, during the whole time of his public miniſtry, which is generally computed to have been three years and a half; a time ſufficient to have detected any impoſture in; eſpecially one that ſhewed himſelf ſo openly, and converſed indifferently

SERM. CCXXXVI. with all ſorts of perſons with ſo little guard and caution.

4. He did all his miracles publicly, not in corners and among ſome ſelect company of people, but before multitudes, and in the greateſt places of concourſe; ſo that, if there had been any thing of impoſture in them, he gave the faireſt opportunity that could be to his enemies to have detected him. Mahomet's miracles were wrought by himſelf alone, without witneſs, which was the beſt way in the world certainly for one that could work no miracles, but yet could perſuade the people what he pleaſed: but our SAVIOUR did nothing in private. His transfiguration only was before three of his diſciples; and therefore he made no uſe of that as an argument to the Jews, but charged his diſciples to tell it to none, till after his reſurrection, becauſe that would give credit to it; after they were aſſured of that, they would eaſily believe his transfiguration: but all his other miracles were in the ſight of the people. He healed publicly, and admitted all to ſee what he did. When he turned the water into wine, it was at a public feaſt; when he multiplied the loaves and the fiſhes, it was in the ſight of four or five thouſand people; when he raiſed Lazarus from the dead, it was before a great multitude of the people. The works that he did durſt abide the light, and the more they were manifeſted, the more miraculous they did appear.

5. His miracles were generally beneficial, and for the good of men; ſo that they had thoſe two characters of divinity ſtamped upon them, that they were effects both of power and goodneſs. Moſt of his miracles were ſuch as tended to the benefit of mankind; moſt

moſt of them were either healing, or feeding miracles, or refreſhing, as turning the water into wine; or tending to the peace of human ſociety, as the miracle that he wrought rather than he would give offence by not paying tribute. It is true indeed he might have ſhewn his power every way, he gave ſome inſtances of it in other kinds, which might ſeem more for his purpoſe, and for the manifeſtation of his power, as in his allaying the ſtorm, and walking upon the water: but he wrought no miracles that were deſtructive, except only two, namely, his permitting the devil to enter into the ſwine, Matt. viii. 28. whereby the inhabitants of the place ſuſtained a great loſs. But our SAVIOUR did this upon very good reaſon, as a reproof to that ſordid temper which he ſaw to be in them; they were ſo immerſed in the world, and wedded to their intereſts, that they would, rather than loſe any thing in that kind, forfeit all the bleſſings that the Meſſias brought with him; and this temper appeared afterward in them; for though they were convinced that he had wrought a miracle, yet becauſe they had ſuſtained ſome prejudice, "they de-"ſired him to depart out of their coaſts."

The other exception is his curſing of the fig-tree, Matt. xxi. 19. which had a moral ſignification to his diſciples, and was a ſharp warning to them, what they muſt look for if they were unfruitful. Our SAVIOUR rebukes our ſloth and barrenneſs in the fig-tree.

Secondly, next to the miracles of our SAVIOUR's life, I mentioned thoſe that were wrought at his death, which though they were not wrought by him, yet they were wrought to give teſtimony to him, that he was ſome extraordinary perſon; for as much

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much as when he died, the frame of nature was put into ſuch a trembling and melancholy poſture. So the hiſtory of the goſpel tells us, Matt. xxvii. 45. that "from the ſixth hour till the ninth, there was "darkneſs over all the land;" which, as learned men have calculated, could not be an eclipſe, according to the natural courſe of things. And, ver. 51, 52, &c. "The veil of the temple was rent "from the top to the bottom, and the earth did "quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were "opened."

Thirdly, the great miracle which was wrought after his death, in raiſing him from the dead, together with thoſe two that were conſequent upon it; his viſible aſcending into heaven, and his ſending the holy Ghoſt upon the apoſtles and primitive Chriſtians, in ſuch miraculous gifts and powers.

Firſt, the great miracle of his reſurrection, after he had lain three days in the grave. This was the miracle which was to be the chief atteſtation of his divine authority, and to give confirmation to the doctrine which he declared to the world. And accordingly we find that the chief office of the apoſtles was, to be witneſſes of his reſurrection; and the great evidence they were to give to the world of his divine authority was, "that GOD raiſed him from "the dead." And we find the ſcripture every where laying the great ſtreſs of his divine authority upon this miracle. Acts xvii. 31. "By that man "whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given "aſſurance unto all men, in that he hath raiſed "him from the dead." Rom. i. 4. "Declared "mightily to be the Son of GOD, by his reſurrec-"tion from the dead." 1 Pet. i. 21. "Who by "him

" him do believe in GOD, that raiſed him up from the dead, and gave him glory." SERM. CCXXXVI.

Now that this miracle was really wrought, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, by producing ſuch evidence for it, as the nature of the thing to be proved (which is matter of fact) will bear. I ſhall therefore,

Firſt, produce ſuch teſtimony as we have for it.

Secondly, add ſome conſiderations that may ſerve to give ſtrength and advantage to the teſtimony.

Firſt, for the teſtimony we have of this. In ſhort, we have it atteſted by an abundantly ſufficient number of eye-witneſſes; and greater evidence than this, matter of fact is not capable of. For the eye-witneſſes and the number of them, you have them produced by St. Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 5, 6, 7, 8. The ſum of what he ſaith is this; that CHRIST after his reſurrection was ſeen once by Peter alone, once by James alone, and twice by all the apoſtles together, and by above five hundred brethren at once. So that the number of the eye-witneſſes is abundantly ſufficient. And that they did atteſt this, appears by the hiſtory of the goſpel, which hath deſcended down to us by uncontrolled tradition. And in this caſe we require no more credit to be given to the goſpel than to any other hiſtory, or narrative of matter of fact; which whoſoever doth deny, takes away the faith of hiſtory, and makes it impoſſible to prove the truth of any thing that is paſt *.

Secondly, I ſhall add ſome conſiderations that may ſerve to give ſtrength and advantage to this teſtimony; partly relating to the perſons that give this teſtimony, and partly to the matter or thing which they atteſt.

* See vol. X. ſerm. CXCIII.

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1. In reference to the perſons that give this teſtimony, we may conſider them with theſe three advantages.

(1.) That they are credible perſons.

(2.) That they agree in their teſtimony.

(3.) That the greateſt ſufferings could not make them to conceal it or deny it.

(1.) For the credibility of the perſons. Two things render a witneſs ſuſpected, want of knowledge, or of integrity; if either he do not ſufficiently know the thing which he atteſts; or there be a reaſon to ſuſpect his fidelity in relating the thing. Now the witneſſes in this caſe of the reſurrection cannot be queſtioned, for either of theſe: not for want of knowledge, becauſe they were eye-witneſſes, as I ſaid before; nor for want of faithfulneſs. There are two things which ordinarily make us ſuſpect the fidelity of a witneſs; if there be either an appearance of deceit in the manner of the relation, or of deſign in the end of it: but the witneſſes of CHRIST's reſurrection are free from both theſe grounds of jealouſy.

1. There is no appearance of deceit in the manner of their relating it. We ſuſpect a relation that is either too general, or too artificial: but the report of theſe witneſſes cannot be charged with either of theſe. For,

(1.) They report the thing with all it's circumſtances of time and place; when he roſe, what were the circumſtances of it, where he was ſeen, and by whom, how often he appeared, what he did and ſaid.

(2.) They uſe no art or inſinuation in the manner of delivering, but report it with the greateſt plainneſs,

plainneſs, and nakedneſs, and ſimplicity that can be imagined; without any ambiguity, or obſcurity, or flouriſh of language, as becomes an honeſt relator, who uſeth no arts, becauſe he is not guilty to himſelf of any deſign to deceive.

2. Nor is there any appearance of deſign as to the end of their teſtimony. What deſign could they have who did knowingly renounce all ſecular advantages of honour, and riches, and reputation, and forego all worldly contentment, and expoſe themſelves to continual hazards and ſufferings. They got nothing by bearing this teſtimony, but what every man, that hath worldly deſigns, doth moſt ſolicitouſly avoid.

(2dly.) They concur and agree in their teſtimony. They conſtantly delivered the ſame teſtimony with all it's circumſtances, both in word and writing; ſeveral perſons in ſeveral places, without varying or diſagreeing in the leaſt material circumſtance.

(3dly.) The greateſt ſufferings could not make them either deny it, or conceal it; which is a great argument of their integrity. If the thing they atteſted had been falſe, it had been an unparalled madneſs for any one to perſiſt in it to the loſs of life; and incredible that ſo many ſhould conſpire in the ſame unreaſonable and unaccountable folly; eſpecially when the religion which they profeſſed did exclude all liars from all the happineſs and rewards of the next life, which they pretended to be perſuaded of; ſo that, whatſoever thoſe perſons might be otherwiſe, and however they might falſify in other things, there is no reaſon to doubt of their truth and fidelity in this report, becauſe they died

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for the teſtimony of it. Therefore the higheſt atteſtation of a thing is called martyrdom, and the moſt credible witneſſes martyrs. And though bare martyrdom be not an argument of the infallible truth of a teſtimony, or of the infallibility of the perſon that gives it; yet it is one of the higheſt arguments that can be of his honeſty and integrity in that thing, and that he believes himſelf; otherwiſe he would not die for it: and it is a good evidence of the general integrity of theſe perſons, as to all other things, that they were ſo conſcientious, as not, for fear of death, to deny that which they believed to be a truth, nor to conceal that which they believed to be of importance.

2. As to the matter or thing which they atteſted, we may conſider it with theſe advantages.

1. The reſurrection of CHRIST was ſuch a thing, as in it's own nature they were capable of giving evidence to.

2. We will conſider a little the circumſtances of it, which add much to the credit of it.

3. We will conſider the effects that this relation and report had in the world.

4. The circumſtances of the perſons who entertained the belief of it.

1. Let us conſider that the reſurrection of CHRIST is ſuch a thing, as in the nature of it they were capable of giving teſtimony to. Indeed if it were ſuch a thing, as either in the nature of it were abſolutely impoſſible, as if a man ſhould ſay he had ſeen or handled a pure ſpirit; or elſe ſuch as theſe perſons could not reaſonably be preſumed to be competent witneſſes of it, as if a man that is altogether ignorant in geometry ſhould ſay, that he had ſeen ſuch a

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man demonſtrate a propoſition in Euclid; in theſe caſes, though a man be never ſo credible, yet he is not to be credited. But the reſurrection of CHRIST is no ſuch thing; no man that believes that GOD can make a living body out of nothing, can think it abſolutely impoſſible to raiſe a dead body to life; nor was it a thing they could not be preſumed to be competent witneſſes of: for that which they atteſt concerning the reſurrection of CHRIST, is that which every man may give evidence in, for it requires nothing but common ſenſe and underſtanding; as to touch and handle a body, and know that it is a body; to ſee a man perform the operations of life; to ſee him walk, and eat, and hear him ſpeak: and this they atteſt of CHRIST, after he was crucified, dead, and buried, that they ſaw him ſeveral times, and converſed with him; and they could not be miſtaken in the perſon, being ſo intimately and familiarly acquainted with him in his life-time.

2. We will conſider a little the circumſtances of his reſurrection. He had foretold in his life-time, that he would riſe again the third day. The chief prieſts and the Phariſees remembered this ſaying, and therefore leſt his diſciples ſhoule come by night and ſteal him away, they make the ſepulchre ſure, ſeal the ſtone, and ſet a guard of ſoldiers. The diſciples whom they were afraid of, they were ſcattered with fear; and that it might appear that it was the work of GOD, there was a great earthquake which made the guard to tremble; and in their ſight an angel appearing in a moſt glorious manner, rolled away the ſtone; and when he was riſen and appeared to his diſciples, they were terrified, and thought it had been a ſpirit, till our SAVIOUR bids them

SERM. CCXXVI. them "ſee him, and handle him, that he had fleſh "and bones, which a ſpirit could not have." He converſed familiarly with them; and for their greater ſatisfaction did eat with them; and to ſatisfy the ſcrupulous unbelief of Thomas, he bids him put his hand into the hole of his ſide, and ſee in his hands the print of the nails, to ſhew that it was the ſame body that was crucified. Now the greater their jealouſy and unbelief was, the greater is the evidence of the thing; and it ſhews that it was upon great conviction, and when they could no longer reſiſt the evidence of the thing, that they did believe it: and after all this, they ſaw him aſcend up into heaven, and found the promiſe of the Spirit made good to them, to furniſh them with power and gifts, for carrying on the work of the goſpel.

3. We will conſider the ſtrange and wonderful effects that this report and relation had in the world. The preaching of CHRIST crucified, and riſing from the dead, had a ſtrange operation upon the world. With ſuch admirable ſucceſs did this prevail, that in a few years the goſpel was entertained in a great part of the world. The plain and naked relation of this, by men that were deſtitute of ſecular learning and arts, without the help of power, or policy, or any other worldly advantage, did prevail with men to entertain and embrace that profeſſion, againſt the prejudice of education, the biaſs of corrupt nature, and the advantages of worldly intereſts: nor could all the oppoſition of the great and the wiſe, the princes and the philoſophers of the world, give a check to the prevalency of it. Surely nothing but truth could have wrought thoſe great wonders and effects, naked and unarmed. Thoſe ſtrange and

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miraculous effects which are matter of fact, and undeniable, one would think, ſhould render it very eaſy to any man to believe the miracle of CHRIST's reſurrection.

4. We will conſider the circumſtances of the perſons who entertained the belief of it. Many of them were very rational, and ſerious, and inquiſitive perſons, who had opportunity to ſatisfy themſelves about the truth of it; and if there had been any reaſon to diſbelieve the teſtimony that was given, had ſuch great and generous ſpirits, that if it had been for their advantage and intereſt to have believed it, yet out of the greatneſs of their minds they would not have entertained any ungrounded relation, much leſs a religion built upon it. Such were ſome eminent among the Jews and heathens for their great learning, and knowledge of philoſophy, and all excellent endowments, who were early converted to chriſtianity. And as for the multitude who embraced the goſpel, the doctrine of it was ſo contrary to their luſts, and the profeſſion of it to their intereſt, that nothing can be imagined to have perſuaded them to the belief of it, but a high ſatisfaction of the truth of it; and particularly of this great miracle of CHRIST's reſurrection, upon which principally the goſpel doth rely. And thus I have endeavoured to give you the beſt evidence I could of the truth of this miracle.

I ſhould now proceed to take notice of the objections that may be made againſt it: but this I ſhall reſerve to the following diſcourſe.

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The evidences of the truth of the chriſtian religion.

2 COR. iv. 3, 4.

But if our goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that are loſt: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, leſt the light of the glorious goſpel of CHRIST, *who is the image of* GOD, *ſhould ſhine unto them.*

SERM CCXXXVII. The fourth ſermon on this text.

I HAVE been conſidering the evidence which thoſe who lived in our SAVIOUR's time had of his divine authority, from the power of working miracles, with which he was endued.

The miracles which concern our SAVIOUR I reduced to three heads; thoſe of his life; thoſe wrought at his death; and the great miracle of his reſurrection from the dead, together with thoſe two that were conſequent upon it; his viſible aſcenſion into heaven, and his ſending the holy Ghoſt.

As to the reſurrection of our SAVIOUR, I have produced the teſtimonies for it, and have added ſome conſiderations that may give ſtrength and advantage to that teſtimony; and ſhall now proceed to take notice of the moſt conſiderable exceptions that may be made againſt it. And all the exceptions

tions that can be brought againſt it, that are of any moment, and that I know of, are theſe three; that tradition of the Jews, that he was ſtolen out of the grave; or that he was not really dead; or that his appearance was an illuſion from evil ſpirits. The firſt of theſe is ancient, and was the invention of the Jews, and denies the integrity of the witneſſes of his reſurrection, making them deceivers: the two laſt ſuppoſe the fidelity of the witneſſes, but ſay they were deceived, either as to his death, or as to his appearance afterward: and theſe have been ſince invented by atheiſtical ſpirits. I ſhall briefly anſwer them, and firſt in general, I ſay theſe two things. SERM. CCXXXVII.

1. That they who deny this, have this diſadvantage, that they are to prove a negative, which is never capable of that evidence, which an affirmation is.

2. Theſe exceptions look very like envy; for they do not concur to make up one ſtrong objection againſt the teſtimony of CHRIST's reſurrection; but each of them contradicts the other, and is inconſiſtent with them: for if the tradition of the Jews be true, that he was ſtolen out of the grave after he was dead and buried, and that the ſtory of his appearing to them was a forgery, then the two latter exceptions are falſe, and ſo of the reſt; ſo that theſe exceptions look very like the falſe witneſſes that were ſuborned againſt CHRIST, that "they do not "agree together." But to the objections themſelves I anſwer,

Firſt, the tradition of the Jews, that his body was ſtolen out of the ſepulchre, and all that which is related afterwards of his appearing to his diſciples,

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ples, and converſing with them, and aſcending into heaven, was a forgery and impoſture.

Anſw. 1. We have early notice given of this in the hiſtory of the goſpel, Matt. xxviii. 11. that when the chief prieſts heard that his body was gone out of the grave, they conſulted together, and hired the ſoldiers to ſay that the diſciples came by night, and whilſt they were aſleep, ſtole him away. Obſerve what it was that the ſoldiers were to teſtify, that whilſt they were aſleep, the diſciples came and ſtole away his body. Very credible perſons, that were to give teſtimony of what they ſaw done, whilſt they were aſleep! A man had need to be hired with a great ſum to give ſuch a teſtimony, ſo ridiculous: and it ſeems the Phariſees looked upon the governor as very ſimple, that would be ſo eaſily perſuaded of ſo unlikely a thing.

2. It ſhould ſeem it was not believed by themſelves; for Joſephus, a knowing and learned man of that nation and religion, who lived immediately after that time, ſpeaks poſitively in the 18th book of his antiquities, that CHRIST was crucified, and "appeared to his diſciples the third day, riſing from "the dead;" and he ſpeaks not a word of the forgery, which had been much for the credit of his nation and religion.

3. If we compare the fidelity of the perſons on both ſides; the witneſſes of CHRIST's reſurrection cannot be ſuſpected of any worldly intereſt or deſign; but the prieſts and Phariſees were concerned, both in reputation and intereſt, to blaſt this miracle as much as they could; becauſe, if it ſhould be entertained, both their religion would be endangered, and they would be looked upon as murderers

of

of him, whoſe holineſs and innocency was atteſted by ſuch a miracle. SERM. CCXXXVII.

4. If this exception had been true, it had been eaſy to have diſcovered the impoſture, and undeceived the people; the goſpel would have fallen and ſunk in a ſhort time. Nothing but truth could have borne up and prevailed againſt ſo much oppoſition. If this had been the work "of men," and an impoſture, it "would have come to nought;" but it was truth, and "of GOD," and therefore it "could "not be overthrown."

Secondly, that he was not dead when he was put into the grave; that he was but in a ſwoon or deliquium, and ſo might riſe again without a miracle.

Anſw. 1. We may reaſonably ſuppoſe, that the malice of the Jews took care to kill him. Beſides, the circumſtances of the ſtory do ſufficiently evidence it. Upon the piercing of his ſide, "water "and blood came out;" which was an evidence that his heart was pierced. And after his body was exhauſted of its blood, there could be no return to life again. But it ſeems the ſoldiers were ſatisfied in the thing, who when they came to break his bones, ſpared him, "becauſe they ſaw that he "was already dead."

2. If he was not dead, yet how ſhould he riſe again? It was a pitiful ſecuring of the grave, and a little great ſtone that was rolled upon it, if a weak, and wounded, and ſpent man, after ſo much pain, and the expence of ſo much blood, could roll it away.

3. Suppoſe he did riſe, what became of him afterwards? How came we to have no particulars of

SERM. CCXXXVII. of what became of him'? If thoſe which the ſtory gives us be true, that after forty days he was taken up into heaven, we need not doubt of his reſurrection, for this is as miraculous as that.

Thirdly, the third and laſt exception is as unreaſonable as any, which grants that he did ſeem to appear to his diſciples, but they were impoſed upon by the illuſion of evil ſpirits.

Anſw. 1. That which may be an evaſion in any caſe, is to be admitted in no caſe. This exception ſuppoſeth as much evidence for his reſurrection as this or any other thing is capable of; and yet would make it an illuſion: but this denies all certainty; for if we may be deceived when we have the greateſt aſſurance of a thing that our ſenſes can give us; then we may not only queſtion the reſurrection of CHRIST, but every thing elſe.

2. If we believe the providence of GOD, we cannot think it to be ſo little vigilant, as that honeſt and well-meaning perſons ſhould be continually expoſed to the inſolence and cheats of evil ſpirits, and in a matter of the greateſt concernment ſhould be ever liable to be deceived, and cannot help it.

Having thus conſidered our SAVIOUR's reſurrection, and anſwered the objections againſt it, I proceed to thoſe two miracles which followed his reſurrection; namely, his aſcenſion into heaven; and his ſending the holy Ghoſt upon the apoſtles and primitive Chriſtians in ſuch miraculous powers and gifts.

Firſt, his aſcenſion into heaven. And of this the diſciples of our SAVIOUR were alſo eye-witneſſes. So St. Luke tells us, Acts i. 4, 9. "And "when they were aſſembled together," and CHRIST among

among them after his reſurrection, and when he had given them in charge what he would have them to do, "as they looked on, he was taken up, and a "cloud received him out of their ſight." What more viſible demonſtration could there be, that this man was ſent of GOD, than that, after he had preached the doctrine which he came to deliver to the world, and confirmed it by ſo many miracles, and GOD had given ſo great an atteſtation to him, by raiſing him up from the dead; I ſay, what more viſible demonſtration that he came from GOD, than to ſee him taken up into heaven, after he had finiſhed the work for which GOD ſent him into the world. SERM. CCXXXVII.

Secondly, the ſending of the holy Ghoſt upon the apoſtles and primitive Chriſtians in ſuch miraculous powers and gifts, whereby they were enabled to ſpeak diverſe languages, in order to the more expedite publiſhing of the goſpel to the world, to heal diſeaſes, and to raiſe the dead, to foretel things to come, and (which was common with the apoſtles and all Chriſtians for ſome ages) they had a power of caſting out devils, by adjuring them in the name of CHRIST. Now what could be a clearer evidence that he came from GOD, and was returned to him, than the conferring of ſuch miraculous powers and gifts upon men, after he was aſcended into heaven, as a teſtimony that he was inveſted in his royalty, having a power conferred upon him to diſpenſe thoſe gifts to men.

But of the aſcenſion * of our SAVIOUR, and the extraordinary gifts of the holy Ghoſt †, having up-

* See vol. X. ſerm. CXCVI.

† Ibid. ſerm. CXCVII, CXCVIII, CXCIX. and ſerm. CCXXIX, CCXXX, CCXXXI. of this volume.

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on other occaſions diſcourſed at large, I ſhall need to add no more here; only, before I conclude this head, I ſhall briefly mention the chief of thoſe objections, which theſe miracles, which were wrought by our SAVIOUR and on his behalf, are liable to, and endeavour to return a ſatisfactory anſwer to them. And there are two objections againſt his miracles in general.

Firſt, that he wrought them by the power of the devil.

Secondly, the other objection is taken from that expreſſion of the evangeliſt, Matt. xiii. 58. where it is ſaid, that when JESUS was in his own country, "he did not many mighty works there, becauſe of "their unbelief;" which ſaying is perverſely abuſed by ſome, as if it ſignified, that the credulity and ſtrong imagination of the people was a great ingredient into his miracles.

Firſt, that he wrought them by the power of the devil. This was the objection which the Jews of old made againſt our SAVIOUR, Matt. xii. 24. "that he caſt out devils by Beelzebub the prince "of the devils," who had power and authority over the reſt, and conſequently to caſt out thoſe that were ſubject to him; and the Jews at this day make the ſame objection againſt all his miracles. Celſus did the ſame.

To this I cannot render a better anſwer than our SAVIOUR himſelf did, when this objection was firſt ſtarted, which was twofold.

1. That it was very unlikely, that the devil ſhould contribute to the ruin and overthrow of his own kingdom, Matt. xii. 25, 26. "Every king-"dom divided againſt itſelf is brought to deſola-"tion:

" tion: and every city and houſe divided againſt SERM.
" itſelf ſhall not ſtand. And if Satan caſt out Sa- ccxxxvii.
" tan, he is divided againſt himſelf: how ſhall then
" his kingdom ſtand?" The force of which argument is this, that it cannot be imagined that he who preacheth a doctrine ſo contrary to the deſign which the devil carried on in the world, and ſo deſtructive to his kingdom, as our SAVIOUR did, ſhould be aſſiſted by him to confirm the doctrine by any miraculous effects; eſpecially ſuch as did ſo directly tend to the overthrow of his own kingdom, and to diſpoſſeſs him of the advantage of tyrannizing over men, which he was ſo deſirous to get and hold.

But, 2. he tells them, that by the ſame reaſon that they attributed thoſe miracles of his to the devil, all miracles that ever were wrought in the world might be attributed to him. Did it appear by the tendency of his doctrine, or the courſe and deſign of his life and actions, or by any magical rites that he uſed, that he had any familiarity with the devil, or carried on any deſign for him? What colour of reaſon then was there to aſcribe the miracles that he wrought to the devil, any more than the miracles that Moſes had wrought; or any more than thoſe diſpoſſeſſions which were wrought by the children of their own nation, in the name of the GOD of Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob? ver. 27. " If I by Beelzebub caſt out devils, by whom do
" your children caſt them out? Therefore they
" ſhall be your judges." Several among yourſelves do, or at leaſt pretend to caſt out devils by the power of GOD, and you believe they do ſo; why ſhould you not think that I do it by the ſame

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power? what reaſon have you to ſuſpect me of correſpondence with the devil, more than them? No anſwer could have been more ſatisfactory in itſelf, and more oppoſite to thoſe that made the objection.

The ſecond objection is grounded upon a ſpiteful and malicious perverting of thoſe words of the evangeliſt, Matt. xiii. 58. where it is ſaid, that JESUS, when he was in his own country, "did "not many mighty works there, becauſe of their "unbelief." From whence ſome atheiſtical perſons, as Cæſar Vaninus, and a wretched man of our own nation, who, I ſuppoſe, ſtole it out of him, have collected, that credulity and ſtrong imagination in the people were the principal ingredients into our SAVIOUR's miracles; and where he did not meet with perſons ſo diſpoſed, he could do no great matter.

This objection deſerves rather to be abhorred and deteſted as a groundleſs and malicious inſinuation, than to be anſwered: but, becauſe it ſeems to have ſome colour as well as ſpite in it, I ſhall briefly return an anſwer to it, and that by giving a plain account of this paſſage of the evangeliſt; and that is this; our SAVIOUR comes to Nazareth, the place where he had been born, and he began to inſtruct them in his doctrine, and, as he uſed to do wherever he came, he wrought ſome miracles for the confirmation of his doctrine; but they, upon an unreaſonable prejudice taken up againſt him, becauſe they had known the meanneſs of his parents and of his education, deſpiſed both his doctrine and his miracles. Our SAVIOUR perceiving that upon this prejudice they rejected the evidence

of

of his miracles, the higheſt atteſtation that God can give, ſaw that there was no good to be done upon them; and therefore leaving them to their own obſtinacy and unreaſonable unbelief, he forbore to do any more great works among them: for the text doth not ſay that he did no mighty works among them, becauſe of their unbelief; but that he did not many mighty works among them; that is, finding them poſſeſſed with this unreaſonable prejudice againſt him, he found they were not to be convinced by any miracle that he could work, and therefore, though he had done ſome mighty works among them, yet he forbore to do any more, as a juſt judgment upon them for their obſtinacy and unbelief. And that this is the plain meaning of it, there needs no more to convince any man, but to read over this paſſage of the evangeliſt, Matt. xiii. 54, 55, 56, 57, 58. "And when "he was come into his own country, he taught "them in their ſynagogue, inſomuch that they "were aſtoniſhed, and ſaid, Whence hath this "man this wiſdom, and theſe mighty works? Is "not this the carpenter's ſon? Is not his mo- "ther called Mary? and his brethren, James, and "Joſes, and Simon and Judas? And his ſiſters, "are they not all with us? Whence then hath "this man all theſe things? And they were of- "fended in him. But Jesus ſaid unto them, A "prophet is not without honour, ſave in his own "country, and in his own houſe. And he did "not many mighty works there, becauſe of their "unbelief." And now judge how little reaſon there is from theſe words, for and ſuch fooliſh and malicious objection. SERM. CCXXXVII.

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I might add farther, if it were neceſſary, that many of his miracles were ſuch as no credulity or ſtrength of imagination could aſſiſt in the working of them; as I could make evident from very many inſtances, particularly that of raiſing Lazarus after he had lain four days in the grave. But enough of this.

Now to reflect upon this evidence of CHRIST's divine authority from the miracles which he did, and which were wrought to give teſtimony to him. What greater ſatisfaction can any one be imagined to have concerning any perſon, that he is ſent from GOD, than the apoſtles had, and the reſt of thoſe who converſed with our SAVIOUR, and ſaw the miracles that were wrought by him, and on his behalf? Suppoſe we had lived in our SAVIOUR's time, and had converſed with him, what greater evidence could we have deſired of his divine authority, than to have ſeen with our eyes ſo many ſtrange things done by him, exceeding any natural power that we know of, and things ſo beneficial to mankind; and all theſe wrought ſo frequently, and ſo openly? To have ſeen this perſon put to death, and at that inſtant the whole frame of nature diſordered and put out of it's courſe? To have ſeen this perſon after he had lain three days in the grave, raiſed to life again; and to have the greateſt aſſurance of this that our ſenſes can give us of any thing? by frequent and familiar converſation; by diſcourſing with him; by eating and drinking with him; by touching and handling of his body? and afterwards to have ſeen this ſame perſon viſibly taken up into heaven; and, according as he had promiſed before he left the world, to have found ourſelves afterward endued

endued with a miraculous power of ſpeaking, all on the ſudden, all ſorts of languages, of healing diſeaſes, of foretelling things to come, of caſting out devils, of raiſing the dead? Had we ſeen all this with our eyes, and experienced this ſtrange power in ourſelves, could there have remained any doubt in us, but that this perſon was ſent from GOD, and ſpecially commiſſioned from heaven to declare the mind of GOD to the world? SERM. CCXXXVII.

If, after all this, any man will ſay, that ſo many perſons, as were eye-witneſſes of theſe things, might be deceived in a plain ſenſible matter; I would deſire that man to prove to me that he is waking, or to evidence to me by better arguments, any thing elſe that he thinks himſelf moſt certain of.

IV. The fourth evidence which thoſe who lived in our SAVIOUR's time had of his divine authority, was the ſpirit of prophecy proved to be in him, and made good by the accompliſhment of his own predictions. This alſo was a clear teſtimony that he was from GOD: for GOD challengeth this as peculiar to the Deity, to foretel future contingents, Iſai. xli. 23. "Shew the things that are to come hereaf-"ter, that we may know that ye are gods." The oracles of the heathen did give out ſome dark and doubtful conjectures about future things: but a clear and certain prediction of things was always looked upon as an argument, that the perſon that could do it was inſpired from GOD; and therefore the ſpirit of prophecy which was in our SAVIOUR, and by him conferred upon the apoſtles afterward, hath always been juſtly looked upon as a good teſtimony that he was from GOD. So the angel tells St John, Rev. xix. 10. that "the teſtimony of JESUS is the "ſpirit of prophecy."

SERM. CCXXXVII. Now the predictions of our SAVIOUR were many; and thoſe very plain, and punctual, and particular; and ſuch as all or moſt of them had their accompliſhment in that age. That we may take a more diſtinct view of them, I ſhall reduce them to theſe five heads.

1. Thoſe that foretold his death, and the circumſtances of it.

2. His reſurrection, and the particular circumſtances of that.

3. The deſcent of the holy Ghoſt upon the apoſtles, with the circumſtances belonging to that.

4. The deſtruction of Hieruſalem before the end of that age, with the ſigns foregoing it, and the concomitant circumſtances of that.

5. Thoſe that foretold the fate of the goſpel in the world, the oppoſition it ſhould meet with, and yet the admirable ſucceſs it ſhould have, notwithſtanding that oppoſition.

1. Thoſe that foretel his death, and the circumſtances of it. This he did very particularly, and at ſeveral times, Matt. xvi. 21. he told his diſciples, "that he muſt go unto Jeruſalem, and there ſuffer "many things of the elders, and chief prieſts, and "ſcribes, and be killed." Mark x. 33, 34. and Matt. xx. 18, 19. he foretels more particularly the manner of their proceedings againſt him, that "the "chief prieſts and ſcribes ſhould condemn him "to death;" but that they ſhould not put him to death, but "deliver him to the Gentiles, to "mock, and ſcourge, and crucify him," which was afterwards done by Pilate the Roman governor. He foretold likewiſe the manner how this ſhould be brought about, Matt. xx. 18. that he ſhould be "be-

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" betrayed into the hands of men." And he did particularly point out before-hand the man that was to betray him, Matt. xxvi. 23. " He that dippeth " his hand with me in the diſh, the ſame ſhall betray " me." He foretold that his diſciples ſhould forſake him, Matt. xxvi. 31. " All of you ſhall be " offended because of me this night; for it is " written, I will ſmite the ſhepherd, and the ſheep " ſhall be ſcattered." And when Peter declared his confident reſolution to ſtick to him, he foretold that he ſhould deny him, with very particular circumſtances of the time and manner of it, Matt. xiv. 30. " This night before the cock crow twice, thou " ſhalt deny me thrice;" which was all punctually accompliſhed.

2. He punctually foretold his reſurrection, with the circumſtances of it, that " he ſhould riſe again " the third day," Matt. xvi. 21. and that, " after " he was riſen, he would go before them into Ga- " lilee," Matt. xxvi. 32. which was accompliſhed, Matt. xxviii. 16.

3. He foretold likewiſe the deſcent of the holy Ghoſt upon the apoſtles, in miraculous powers and gifts, Luke xxiv. 49. " Behold, I ſend the promiſe " of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city " of Jeruſalem, until ye be endowed with power " from on high." He ſpecifies the place where the holy Ghoſt ſhould deſcend; and what the effects of this deſcent of the holy Ghoſt upon them ſhould be, he tells them particularly, Mark xvi. 17, 18. " And theſe ſigns ſhall follow them that " believe: in my name ſhall they caſt out de- " vils, and they ſhall ſpeak with new tongues; " they ſhall take up ſerpents, and if they drink

" any

SERM. CCXXXVII. "any deadly thing, it ſhall not hurt them; they "ſhall lay hands on the ſick, and they ſhall re- "cover." All which was punctually fulfilled in the ſecond of the Acts, and the following part of that hiſtory.

There are yet two other inſtances of our SAVIOUR's prophetical ſpirit, which I mentioned; but thoſe I reſerve for the next diſcourſe.

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JOHN xx. 31.

But theſe are written, that ye might believe that JESUS *is the* CHRIST, *the Son of* GOD, *and that believing, ye might have life through his name.* p. 300.

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JOHN xx. 31.

But theſe are written, that ye might believe that JESUS *is the* CHRIST, *the Son of* GOD, *and that believing, ye might have life through his name.* p. 316

SERM. CCXXIX, CCXXX, CCXXXI.

Of the miracles wrought in confirmation of chriſtianity.

HEB. ii. 4.

GOD *alſo bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the holy Ghoſt, according to his own will.*

p. 334, 359, 375.

SERM. CCXXXII, CXXXIII.

The advantages of truth in oppoſition to error.

1 JOHN iv. 4, 5.

Ye are of GOD, *little children, and have overcome them: becauſe greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore ſpeak they of the world, and the world heareth them.* p. 389, 404.

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The evidences of the truth of the chriſtian religion, with the cauſe and the danger of infidelity.

2 COR. iv. 3, 4.

But if our goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that are loſt: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, leſt the light of the glorious goſpel of CHRIST, *who is the image of* GOD, *ſhould ſhine unto them.*

p. 417, 430, 446, 460.

The END of the ELEVENTH VOLUME.